SOUTH AMERICAN EXPLORER

Spring 1999

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Ecuador's Sangay
Dirt-Eaters of South America
Peru Desert Adventure
Wacko Easter Island Theories
Mapping the Patagonian Ice Cap

Explore South America with the

South American Explorers Club

The South American Explorers Club

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With Clubhouses in Quito, Ecuador, and Lima, Peru, and U.S. headquarters in Ithaca, New York, the SAEC collects and makes available to its members up-to-date, reliable information about Central and South America.

Membership is US $40 ($70 couple) per year. Residents outside the U.S. add US $10 (US $7 for Canada) for postage. Those wishing to sign up in the United Kingdom can join through Bradt Publications (Please allow 4-6 weeks to receive membership cards), 41 Nortoft Road, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 OLA, U.K.

Aims and Purposes:
The South American Explorers Club was founded in 1977 to:

- Further the exchange of information among travelers, outdoors people and researchers
- Support scientific field exploration and research in the social and natural sciences
- Promote field sports such as mountaineering, white water running, hiking, caving, biking and others.
- Awaken greater interest in and appreciation for wilderness conservation and wildlife protection.
- Receive contributions for projects aimed at conserving natural resources and improving social conditions in Latin America.

South American Explorer:
A 64-page quarterly magazine with articles on adventure travel, scientific discovery, history, archaeology, mountaineering, native peoples, languages, anthropology, geology, and more.

Membership Services include:
Knowledgeable Staff: Our friendly staff and volunteers provide advice and practical information to members.

Networking: We assist members seeking travel companions for a trip/expedition, or seeking to contact experts in a particular field.

Trip Reports: Trip Reports provide specialized information on just about everything—climbing Aconcagua, volunteering, learning Spanish, lining up a local tour operator, white-water rafting, hiking the Darien Gap, visiting the Galapagos, etc.

Maps: The Club maintains a collection of topographical, geological and road maps for member use and purchase.

Lending Library: There is an extensive library of both English and Spanish books at Clubhouses in Quito and Lima.

Merchandise for sale: Books, maps, tapes, T-shirts and other items are on sale at Clubhouses or through the Club's catalog.

Trip planning: Members can call upon their Club for help and trip planning information.

Discounts: Members receive discounts from many local tour operators, hotels and language schools.

Additional Member Services at Quito and Lima Clubhouses:
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South American Explorers Club Catalog:
The Club's annual catalog contains books, maps, music and language tapes. Please call or write the Ithaca office to request a copy of the latest catalog. Include $3.00 if catalog is to be mailed outside the U.S.

To join the Club: Contact us at our U.S. headquarters, use the order form on page 63, or sign up at one of the clubhouses.

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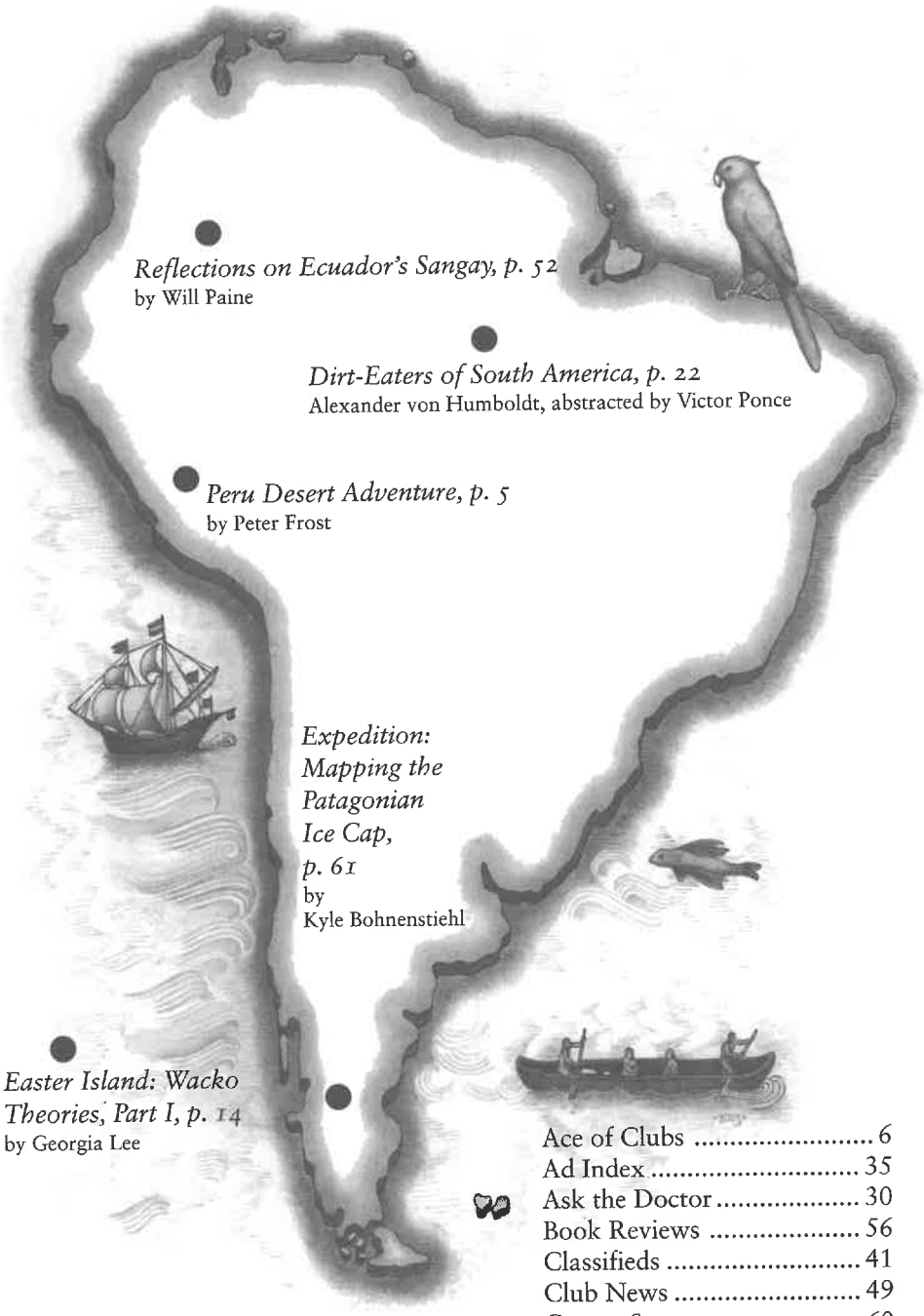

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To the Editor,

Just got Issue 54 (Winter 1998) and was immediately rocketed back twenty-four years by the cover showing All Souls Day at Todos Santos Cuchumatán.

I am happy to see the villagers are still at it. It's not a race, actually, but a run of men astride horses, the men fueled by alcohol and the horses propelled by shouts and whips, if necessary.

Please advise author Carolyn Godfrey those "costumes" the folks wear in Todos Santos are the everyday wear of those Indians in that municipio, or at least they were twenty-four years ago.

I also do not remember much beer being consumed, except by tourists and Peace Corps volunteers. The drink of choice, in terms of price as well as effect, was *aguardiente* or *cusha*, the local home brew that looked, smelled, and tasted like kerosene. Ah, but the effects were guaranteed, for Indian and gringo alike.

I wonder what it's like now in the Cuchumatánes. There was once a glacier covering that plain above Todos Santos back in the Ice Age. In my time, great flocks of sheep were herded over that high plain by many of those colorfully attired Indians from Todos Santos. Is this still true? I'd like to go back to find out. Your cover photo and story inspire me. Keep it up.

Sincerely,
Tom Reidy

To the Editor,

Funny, funny!

When you think you know a foreign language, think twice. In Issue 54's "Ace of Clubs" column, it claimed that "Ich bin ein Berliner" translates into "I am a jelly doughnut." Then how come, when John F. Kennedy made his famous speech, the Berliners roared with approval, rather than laughed their heads off?

The Berliners are a very proud lot and have used this expression to elevate themselves above all other Germans long before some silly baker called some new pastry a "Berliner." Kennedy was well-advised and couldn't have said anything better to excite the Berliners. And I know that nobody was thinking about a ridiculous doughnut. I know, not only because I'm a German (living in Salt Lake City), but "Ich bin ein Berliner"!

Best regards,
Gerhard Henschel

To the Editor,

Love your pub for its entertainment value and find it very useful, too, but I do give up on the puzzle on page 36 of Issue 54 ("South American Explorers" column). Which one is Stübel and which is Reiss?

James N. Snaden

The caption for the photo on the right should read "Wilhelm Reiss (1838-1908)."

To the Editor,

You might remember Göhring's 1874 map from Dan Buck's article ("Fights of Machu Picchu," Issue 32).

The map showed the location of Machu Picchu in 1874. To my limited knowledge, the map was unknown or, at least, forgotten by history. It was only by serendipity that I stumbled upon it myself.

In 1989, I made an appointment to talk with Juan Mejia Baca, the director of Peru's Biblioteca Nacional in Lima. I felt quite presumptuous in bringing up the sad state of the National Library's indexes and had hoped to convince him, in short, to get computer OCR (optical character recognition) with a bit of foreign funding to better index the library's catalog and scan/preserve the older material (the Bib Nacional has, coincidentally, greatly upgraded it computers since).

At the time that I visited Don Juan, I was also searching for Herman Göhring's 1870's book, *Informe Supremo de Paucartambo.*

Göhring had joined Baltazar de la Torre's 1870's expedition to discover a shorter overland route from Paucartambo to the Madre de Dios river. De la Torre became separated

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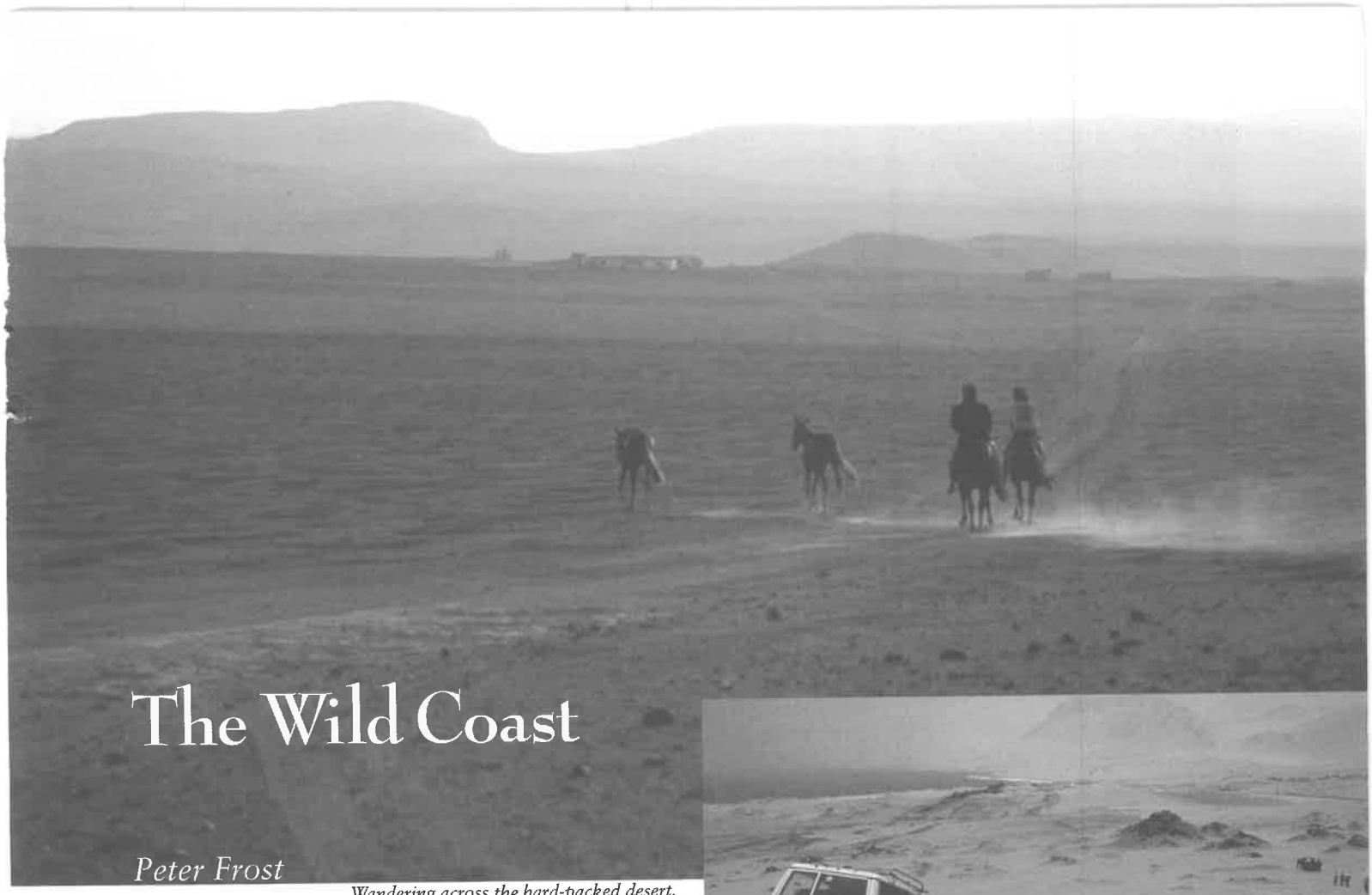

The Wild Coast

Peter Frost

Wandering across the hard-packed desert.

It was vital to lower tire pressure to 12 p.s.i. or so, for better traction on the sand.

Lima is hard to leave. The various deities and demi-gods must be propitiated first. Today there were mysterious packages and envelopes to be dropped off, vital keys to be left somewhere; elsewhere, a dog to be cuddled, someone's granny to be kissed goodbye, and a construction foreman needing funds for cement. So it went: stops in San Isidro, Miraflores, Barranco, until at last we were on the Panamerican, heading south.

The combi drivers that swooped around us like dark angels determined we should never leave this place alive. Yet we crossed the assigned thresholds in our ascent: the Conchán tollgate; the Pucusana police checkpoint; the Chilca turn-off, after which we sensed that we had reached escape velocity from the dread gravity of Planet Lima. We were free.

Peter is a British writer, photographer, and trekking guide who lives in Cusco. He is author of Exploring Cusco *and* The Machu Picchu Historical Sanctuary. *He has also contributed to other guidebooks, including the* Insight Guide to Peru, *and the* Peru Handbook.

There are no maps to these routes; even local people get lost

After Pisco, the Panamerican highway pulls steadily away from the coast. By Ica it is more than 50 km from the Pacific. This was the blessing we sought, because if anything united the motley crew of this 1986 Toyota Land Cruiser, it was an urgent need to escape from Lima-style modernity for a while. David worked in investment banking; Rosi, in the U.S. embassy; Claudia, at a diary which might someday become a novel; while I, the last,

Continued on page 8.

As editors of the *South American Explorer*, we never know what kind of article may show up in the mail, but we think about this a lot, and if the wrong sort of piece shows up, we'll be ready.

Dear Gabriel:

We're returning "God's Little Messengers, Part I" along with your manuscript, photographs, and illustrations.

For starters, we have nothing against angels. This is especially true of the angels in your article who, we're pleased to note, keep popping up in South American locales, doing angelic things, and speaking fluent and colloquial Spanish, Portuguese, and Quechua.

No, in truth it's your insistence that every angel in your piece is an authentic messenger of God that bothers us. A little doubt in this department would make the whole piece more believable. Also, although we're admittedly not that well-versed in angel literature, the "angels" we like to read about (unlike yours) don't go around flaunting their celestial status, let alone dropping undivine remarks, as for example when angel Juanita says, "Look. You can trust me. I'm from on-high." Just an idea, but shouldn't angels keep a low profile?

Also, with all the problems in the world—hunger, poverty, disease, etc.—you may be better off writing about angels that have greater works of God to perform than rigging lotteries, matchmaking, locating lost trinkets, and beefing up attendance at Tupperware parties.

Dear Martha:

If the *South American Explorer* is not exactly a family magazine, it's at least not a supermarket tabloid.

Now, even historical fiction tries to build on known facts and circumstances. You, by contrast, fail to convince us that you lived a previous life as the mistress of Magellan. This has to be made credible before we can believe that you "made the old sea dog groan." You also claim it was *your* idea to sail around the world and that the great seafarer simply went along for the ride. All this may be true, but you offer nary a shred of historical documentation to support your account and instead dwell at great length on the Captain's digestive troubles that caused you so many sleepless nights and led you to finally withhold your favors.

Your bizarre and outlandish claims are even worse when you describe your other previous life as the cabin boy aboard the Beagle, where you allege to have been the recipient of lewd advances by no less a person than the man the world knows as the Father of Evolution.

Truly, Martha, this is not appropriate fare for the readers of the *South American Explorer*.

Dear Cliff:

We know other magazines offer the "kill fee" you mention and pay for articles they assign but don't use. Still, your case is rather different. First of all, you never wrote an article, merely a long query letter describing with rather much self-praise an article you assured us we would love and admire. You'll remember we never assigned you to write that article and, indeed, outlined in great detail why it would not be at all suitable for the *South American Explorer*.

Now you want a kill fee for an article you never wrote? The cheek! Nice try. We won't pay.

Dear Clyde:

We've been tactful up until now, but you have pushed us beyond endurance. For the eighth and hopefully last time: We will not publish your article. As we've already told you, we know all about the rule against walking backward on the Inca Trail. So what? This hardly justifies your repeatedly referring to this well-known trek—a trail hiked by thousands of members every year—as "The Trail of No Return." The same goes for Machu Picchu. Of course, it's quite possible someone died there at some point in time. Is that any reason for you, Clyde, to keep calling this popular tourist site "The Temple of Eternal Doom"?

So far, you've submitted your article under eight different titles. Stop. We won't publish it, now or ever.

Dear Hortense:

First, let us offer our condolences. Clearly, your Uncle Ralph was a warm and exceptional person, and we can see why you admire him as you do. Nonetheless, your uncle was never a member of the South American Explorers Club, never vis-

ited South America, and is on record for repeatedly putting down the inhabitants of the continent in stereotypical terms that today are politically impermissible. In point of fact, the only connection (tenuous, at best) your uncle had to South America was his bi-monthly half-hour spent under the scissors of his Chilean barber Juan Ruiz.

In view of the above, we are returning your uncle's obituary that you wrote along with the $40 check. Of course, there's no Club policy against enrolling someone posthumously in the Club, but we don't feel it's right in this case, especially since we won't be publishing Uncle Ralph's obit. We'd like to think Uncle Ralph would agree with us in this matter.

Dear Frank:

Let us be the first to commend you for exceptionally vivid and gripping prose. Your description of whole Andean villages quaking in fear is totally convincing. Further, you develop your characters well, and the dramatic pacing is right-on.

What doesn't work is the beast itself. What you've written is essentially a piece of science fiction, and our entire staff is unanimous in its opinion that the paralyzing horror you describe so well requires a monster of equally terrifying proportions. Even taking into account cultural differences and attitudes, a werewolf and your own creature are not comparably fearsome. In short, no one in the office felt your account of panicking Andean peasants running over a cliff was credible if the only beast pursuing them was your "were-alpaca."

Dear Chuck:

We are not publishing "S.A. Wildlife in the Cross Hairs."

What makes you so cocksure that "...for years, SAEC members have been thirsting for a meaty article on blood sport," anyway?

The dreaded were-alpaca

We are indeed a fortunate editorial staff to have the time to anticipate future contributions to the *South American Explorer* and draft appropriately courteous and detailed responses. We could not do this without the continued support of the Club's growing membership. We are especially grateful to those members who regularly confirm the Club's unique value by giving above and beyond the requirements of membership. To these honored and special members, our lasting thanks:

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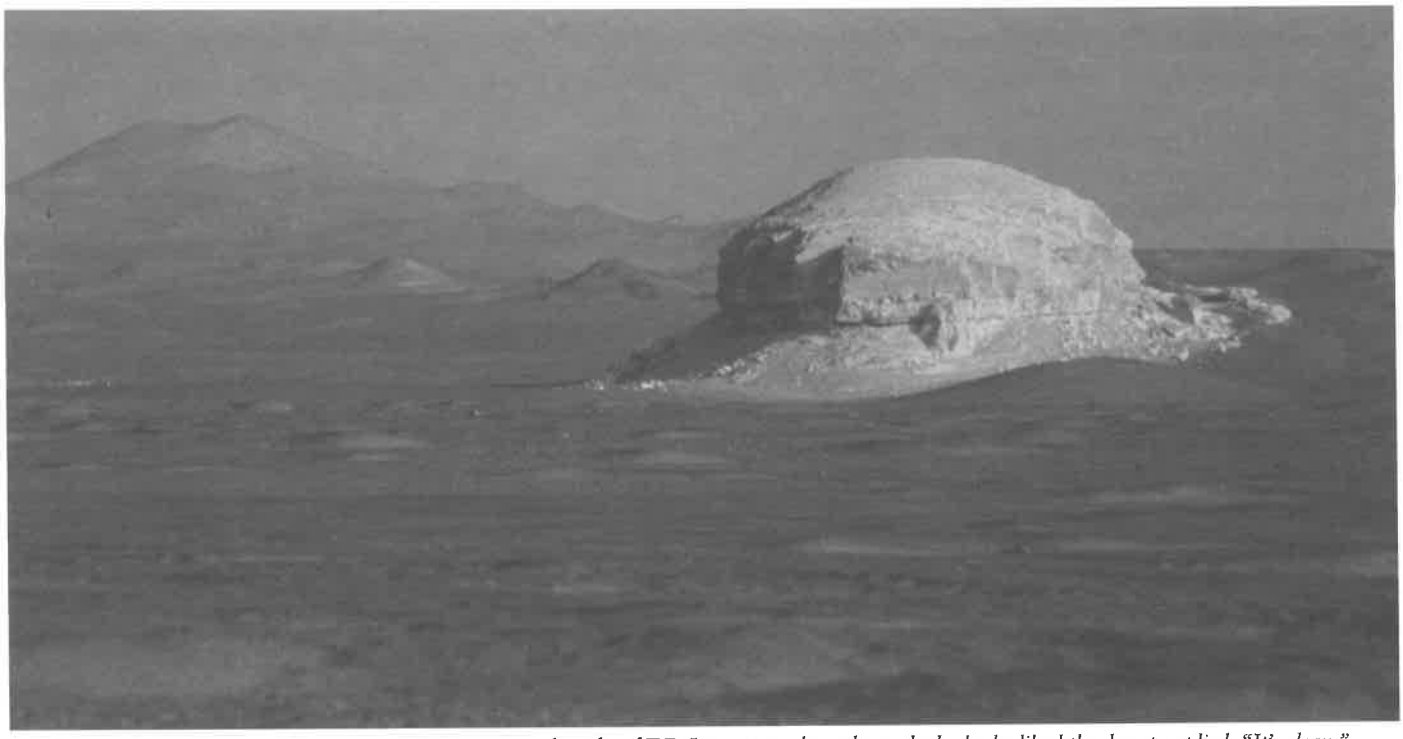
Besieged by raging winds and huge waves.

It would be unheard of to get lost and die of thirst in this desert, but we began to wonder if we might actually accomplish this extraordinary feat.

A wild stretch of coast beyond roads and signposts.

Car tracks came to a dead stop at the edge of steep escarpments, or in fresh mounds of impassable sand.



I thought of T.E. Lawrence who, when asked why he liked the desert, replied: "It's clean."

Desert, continued from page 5.

toiled at various rogue enterprises, among them photography and the writing of tales. We all shared a thirst to reach this wild stretch of coast beyond roads and signposts, and journey back northwards along it until forced to rejoin the despised but indispensable asphalt near Pisco.

Beyond Ocucaje, as the Panamerican peeled away south-eastward, we took a turn-off that maintained our southerly drift along the valley of the Rio Ica. The change was abrupt. Now we were following tracks that wandered across hard-pack desert. They were well-used and wide, but meandered in every direction, splitting at random. They were used mainly by fishermen, who patrol the coast inshore netting and clam diving. There are no maps to these routes; even local people get lost on them.

All week the Paracas wind for which the famous peninsula is named had been blowing violently. It was weakening now, but not yet exhausted. The streamers of scouring sand racing at knee height across the desert had wiped away many of the tracks upon which we acutely depended.

We had now been joined by Alberto Benavides, another committed escapee from civilization, with his late-model diesel Toyota pick-up. Now we were five. Six, if you counted Wayra, his friendly German Bracke hound. We stopped for lunch at Alberto's desert retreat in the Ica valley, and pressed on across the desolate landscape, aiming for Puerto Caballas, near the mouth of the Rio Ica. We found plenty of car tracks, but one after another they came to a dead stop at the edge of steep escarpments, or in fresh mounds of impassable sand. This continued all afternoon, while precious fuel vanished in smoke.

setting down chipped enamel plates as if they were Dresden china

As evening approached we picked up a track that kept going. At last the distant southern end of a long slope to the sea revealed the curved bay and a scattering of fishermen's shacks at Puerto Caballas. The promontory was besieged by raging winds and huge waves. Reaching its shelter, we were instantly consoled by the sight of a fresh catch of *lenguado*. The fishermen agreed to cook some up for us in their grubby shack. One of them, clearly enjoying the surrealism of this encounter, performed a satirically exaggerated waiter act, folding an oily cloth over his arm and setting down chipped enamel plates as if they were Dresden china. The *lenguado*, served fried with just a squeeze of lemon, was incomparably delicious.

The fishermen were divided as to whether we could get much further north by driving along the beach. Some said yes; others that there were impassable dunes before

Punta Olleros. We elected the optimistic version, and set off with the raging wind in our rear. Cleaving to the narrow strip where ocean met beach, we drove northward flat out, barely outrunning the grip of the soft, clingy sand.

We crossed the dry mouth of the Rio Ica as night fell. This river runs rarely, and only for brief periods during the Andean rainy season. Had we come three months later we could not have crossed it at all; in the El Niño of '97/'98 it became a muddy torrent, flooded the city of Ica, and rushed madly to the ocean for three long months.

As darkness fell we left the beach to look for a camp. The lead car instantly became stuck in deep sand. We would camp here, then—like it or not.

murder-most-foul on this lawless coast

In Lima, people had frightened us with warnings of rapine and murder-most-foul on this lawless coast. They declared us mad to be traveling without lots of dogs and guns. We had but one dog, and no guns.

But we trusted that Wayra would bark madly if anyone approached, giving us time to prepare a dignified surrender.

Soon after we arrived five men loomed out of the darkness. Wayra wagged his tail in friendly silence. They greeted us and made small talk, and then, having looked us over, went away. None of us slept much that night. In the morning they returned—to help us dig out our car. We had stopped close to another fisherman's camp, we realized; they had come checking last night because they had been as nervous about us as we were about them.

They helped us free our car and warned us not to proceed up the shoreline, which was impassable further north; we should go inland and circle back to Punta Lomitas. Having lost most of our bravado, we decided to follow their advice. Unfortunately, once inland, we were instantly lost again, this time in places where not one of us had ever been before. We tried one dead-end valley after another; retreated, twisted, turned, all the while observing that there had never been any tracks here; no one had passed this way. This we deemed a bad sign.

Here was a lesson now twice-learned: it is easy to follow the beach, but once inland, beyond view of the ocean, neither trail nor landmark guides you, and the way ahead is always in doubt.

We already knew we would not have enough gas to reach Paracas, but we had hoped to reach another road near Carhuas, by which we could peel off to the highway and refuel. Now we knew that we would run dry much sooner than that. And we could not even pool fuel to get a lone car to the highway, one being diesel and the other gas. It would be unheard of to get lost and die of thirst in this desert, since one is never very far from the highway, but we began to wonder if we might actually accomplish this extraordinary feat, and end up as a small item in next week's *El Comercio*. At last we found a northbound passage through the hills, and still later spotted a patch of dull green in the distant north-east. "That's Puerto Huamaní!" yelled Alberto: his retreat in the Ica valley; the very same place where we ate lunch yesterday. Full circle: we had traveled a long way for last night's *lenguado*.

an impassable stretch of dunes blocked our way

Next day, having refuelled, we struck out again, in a less ambitious effort to reach the coast at Punta Lomitas, some 25 air km north-west. This time the route was fairly clear, bounded by a broad valley. We took a detour to a high point to look at a pre-Columbian site that David had discovered on a previous journey—a foundry where the ancient people had smelted ores. Cinders and seared

detritus lay scattered around. They had built it there to take advantage of the powerful, steady winds at that spot. Today it is miles from the nearest source of firewood, but its location served to confirm what we had already observed in other places—that large parts of this region had once been forested with hardy desert huarango trees.

As we crossed a gentle pass to reach the final slope to the sea, we encountered vegetation—scattered clumps of ground-hugging plants, some of them in flower. This was "lomas" vegetation, a habitat almost unique to Peru, watered by coastal fog banks that cling to the higher ridges during the southern winter months. In ancient times these slopes supported considerable wildlife, and even this decade there have been reports of guanaco sightings near here.

Below us and far off lay Punta Lomitas, a bare point thrusting into the ocean above white skirts of surf. We reached the beach, nursing a reasonable suspicion that we could proceed unimpeded for some distance north. We were using Ricardo Espinosa's guide, *Peru a Toda Costa*, which indicated that a good part of this route was "only for the experienced" and that an impassable stretch of dunes blocked our way at Punta Azua, some 20 air km north. But Espinosa's guide was written for those traveling north-south. The prevailing south-westerly winds created a gentle southern gradient to the dunes, while leaving a steep drop-off at the north edge. Traveling northwards, we reckoned we could climb those south slopes. If we were wrong, we must backtrack to the Ica valley yet again.

We camped at Infiernillo—Little Hell—a stretch of jagged pinnacles thrusting from the ocean; beautiful to the landlubber, but Hell to the sailors of old, who, seeing many ships wrecked on them, assigned them their accursed name. The air rang with the mournful cries of sealions and, in places, stank of their dead. Fish were scarce, so the sealions and seabirds, especially the juveniles, were dying. The Niño of '97/'98 had begun to claim victims.

the importance of tire pressure

Next day we forged north, with no way out except back: a high, extreme escarpment to our right, and Pacific waves lashing our left flank. We passed a dead whale, mistaking it for a beached tree trunk, until we caught the stench of it. The desert here was a delicate watercolor of softly varied hues. Driving down the Panamerican highway, it can seem dull, monotonous, but here it was endlessly changing, bewildering in its subtle complexity. And wonderfully empty. I thought of T.E. Lawrence who, when asked why he liked the desert, replied (in the movie, at least): "It's clean."

We passed an occasional fishermen's encampment, with tattered clam divers' wet-suits hung out to dry, and severely rusted off-road vehicles parked with the hoods up. Salt-eaten hulks though they were, these cars kept running, and all the important parts worked well.

we were beyond civilization; beyond help; beyond the point of no return.

The fishermen liked cars with air conditioners so they could use the compressor to inflate their tires. At Punta Azua we learned the importance of tire pressure. Azua is only a

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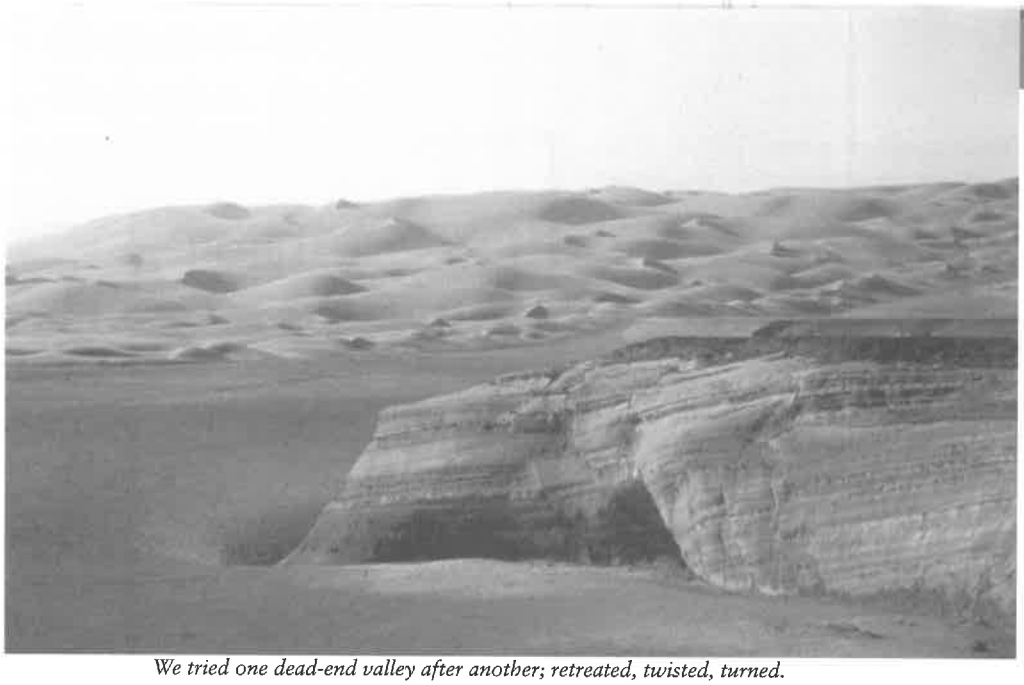


We tried one dead-end valley after another; retreated, twisted, turned.

clearly impassable from the opposite direction. Alberto's pick-up broadsided sickeningly, but recovered. He complained that since our misadventures we had loaded it with so much fuel and water that he was now carrying the equivalent of eight fat men.

We donated a bottle from our Pisco supply to the fishermen, and sped on towards Morro Quemado, a big dark mountain jutting into the ocean, which loomed in the distance to the north. At 600m, it is the highest point on the coastline, and its steep north rim also blocks the southbound traveler's route. In its shadow, facing south, lies the beach of Barlovento, a pool of relative calm spared from the more ferocious winds of this coastline. A good track runs inland from Barlovento to Ica, giving access to weekend sport fishermen and beach goers.

The prevailing south-westerly winds created a gentle southern gradient to the dunes.

map name, we discovered. Local fishermen call it El Mas Allá. That had a nice ring to it: The Further Beyond. Here at The Further Beyond, we were beyond civilization; beyond help; beyond the point of no return.

Only the last part was true, though. All of the fishermen we met along the shoreline, turned out to be civilized—if that means courteous, helpful, considerate; the storied bandits and assassins had taken a vacation. And the first thing that happened here was that a party of fishermen arrived and helped us. They took over the whole enterprise of getting us across the dunes, showing us the best route, and driving one of the cars for us. They also told us it was vital to let our tires down to 12 p.s.i. or so, for better traction on the sand.

David, who had done part of this route on a previous journey, had drawn up three maxims for the Pacific desert traveler: first, accept any help or advice offered by fishermen; second, focus on the essentials (the best-looking car is useless if its tires are shot); third, for emergencies, carry Soldimix (a local brand of epoxy glue) and *pisco*, a popular item to trade with fishermen for any possible need.

We crossed The Further Beyond, sliding down the north slope, which was indeed shockingly steep and

Lawrence would not have liked Barlovento. People camp there, and civilization has smeared it. The throw-away society, recently imported to Peru, gives a party here every weekend and leaves without cleaning up. We camped at Barlovento because we had to.

Next day we crossed the Morro Quemado passage,

an easy ascent, a hair-raising descent. The cars slithered down the half-kilometer of sandy chute at the north end of the Morro, with someone hanging out the window to check that our front wheels were pointing forwards; in soft sand, the driver cannot tell.

El Morro beach revealed further hallucinatory dimensions of the coast: a lone, decaying vertebra from some long-dead whale lay in the bed of a dry lagoon; formations of eroded orange sandstone, intruded by thick layers of translucent mica, swirled and shone. Alberto and Claudia, riding in the second car, encountered a desert fox, which they observed at length before it rose and trotted calmly off.

We drove north along the shore of Bahia de la Independencia, the place where the liberating armies of San Martín made their famous surprise landing on the Peruvian coast. As every Peruvian knows, they saw the red and white flamingoes of Paracas and chose those colors for the national flag of liberated Peru. The armies forced-marched their way north along these very beaches, all the way to Pisco. Today it is hard to imagine how they survived in this hostile environment, without Toyotas and bottled water.

the desert had seduced us all.

North of Punta Carhuas we snaked around threatening dunes and then met another road that cuts in to the shore from Ica. There stood a crumbling monument to a political party. Wayra sidled up and squirted a liquid insult onto the standing column that stood within its five-pointed red star. Here, not so long ago, funds had been amusingly spent building a monument that few people would ever see. Time has treated the monument as harshly as it has treated the party.

Night was falling as we reached Laguna Grande, a large inlet on the south shore of the peninsula called Punta Carretas. Two quite large fishing communities occupy the shores of this bay—a different matter from the small fishing camps we had seen hitherto. Doubtless they sheltered their quota of ruffians, so we pushed on north into the dusk in search of a better place to camp. But the track led away from the beach, and stayed there for twenty dismal kilometers. In moonless dark and deep existential gloom we finally arrived at Mendieta bay. The moment we hit the beach, we baled out at the first likely spot, and spread our mats behind the windbreak formed by the pick-up. This was how we had slept every night. Tonight I suspected we had bivouacked below the tide line, but the majority voted for sleep at any price.

Sure enough, around three a.m. my antennae informed me that the ocean was about to engulf our camp. I awoke, and raised the alarm, just as the first wavelet lapped at Alberto's mattress. Four reluctant campers dragged themselves awake and grumblingly loaded the cars. Wayra had not barked at the incoming waves.

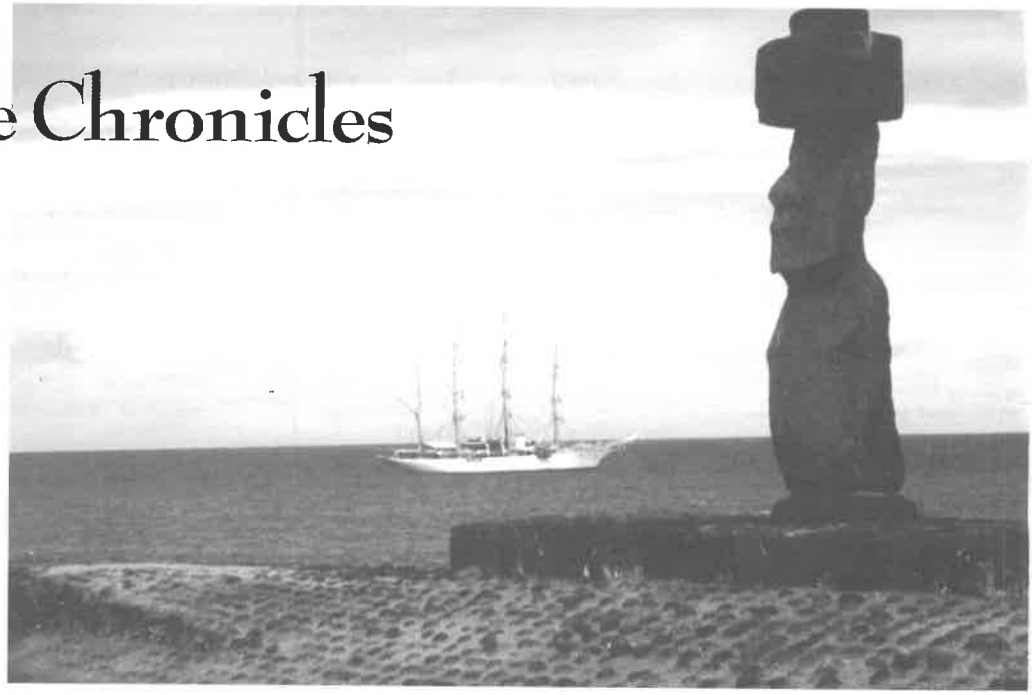
At daybreak Mendieta bay revealed itself as an extraordinarily beautiful spot, with pinnacled arches and tall crags breaking the waves that rolled in across the bay. We were now well inside the Paracas Reserve, and we did some sightseeing as we drove on, stopping to admire the arched "Cathedral" formation, to the south of the peninsula, and watch swarms of guanay cormorants gathered on the rocks. Inca terns wheeled swiftly below us from our vantage on the cliff tops, evading attempts to photograph them.

From here we took the clearly marked route to the Panamerican highway. Our time was up. We had taken five days to reach Paracas from the mouth of the Rio Ica: hardly a rushed trip, but still we were reluctant to leave; the desert had seduced us all.

We passed an occasional fisherman's encampment, with tattered clam divers' wet-suits hung out to dry and severely rusted off-road vehicles parked with the hoods up.

The Nutcase Chronicles

Georgia Lee



"We must therefore present the view of reason, not out of the hope of reconstructing the deserts of ruined minds that have been rusted shut—which is all but impossible—but to educate and train new and fertile minds."

—Isaac Asimov

As an archaeologist who deals mainly with the ancient culture of Easter Island, I have received an assortment of papers and letters that deal with amazing theories and wild speculations about archaeology, the history of humankind, and mega-diffusionist theories. Over many years, these have arrived in the mail, via the web, or appeared in diverse newspapers, journals, and books. Following a program about Easter Island that appeared on Nova a few years back (and in which I participated), communications appeared like mushrooms after a rain. What imagination! Laser beams, extra-terrestrials, anti-gravity—dinosaurs building pyramids—these folks should be writing scripts for "Star Trek" or the "X-Files." Many of these letters and articles are laughable, but obviously they were not so intended by their creators.

Laser beams, extra-terrestrials, anti-gravity—dinosaurs building pyramids

Some of the theories that find their way into print are based upon actual cultural remains, but with an astonishing twist that leaves one breathless. Some hypotheses are almost frightening, giving a peek into disturbed minds. I have been collecting these for years in a special file. So when the *South American Explorer* asked for an article about this subject, it seemed a good time to pry open my Lunatic Fringe File and share the contents with readers.

The material falls into various categories: the outer space bunch, the religious group, those who focus on *rongorongo* (a mysterious script from Easter Island, carved on wooden boards—and just strange enough to entice a large segment of the rationally-challenged), and the Lemuria-Mu crowd which works from a sunken continent theory and is allied with the Atlantis group. There is a bizarre cluster that doesn't quite fit into any of the above categories, which we will look at first.

JUST BIZARRE

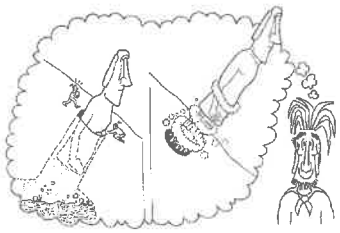
Flying Moai

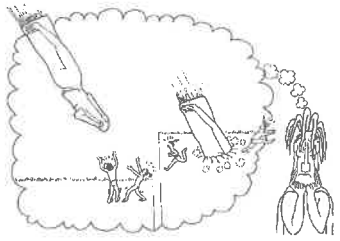
Werner Wolff's book, *Island of Death* (1973) contains an extensive array of misinformation, along with some absolutely amazing "ideas". The most out-of-sight among these is his theory that the statues of Easter Island were carved in positions around the statue quarry so as to be blown onto their *ahu* around the island when the volcano of Rano Raraku erupted. Wolff wonders how the ancient sculptors worked in a "gaseous crater" and suggests that investigators of Easter Island's mysteries should try to confirm his thesis of "volcanic transportation."

While certainly innovative, Wolff's theory has holes the size of Texas. Geologists have determined that the

Georgia Lee received her Ph.D. degree in Archaeology from the University of California at Los Angeles. She lived on Easter Island for some six years while completing her research. Lee is also an expert in the culture of the Chumash.

volcanoes were extinct for thousands of years before the Polynesians arrived on Easter Island. The statue carvers selected the part of the quarry known as Rano Raraku that has the best quality of volcanic tuff for carving. As this volcano has been extinct for hundreds of thousands of years, there were no gases emanating from Rano Raraku in the time span of statue carving (probably AD 600-1600). As for the statues being blown from the quarry to their intended site, they would disintegrate upon impact as a result of "volcanic transportation." In fact, they shatter easily as can be seen at various sites around the island where they have fallen from a standing position and broken.





by Niko Wilkins

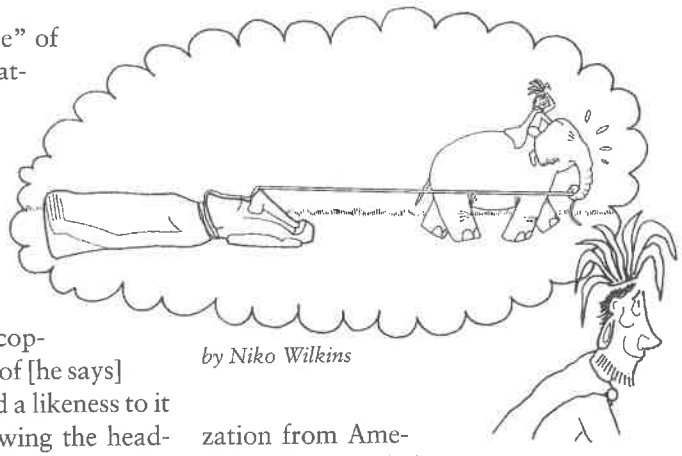
Elephant power

A two-page spread in the *Denver Post* (December 20, 1981, by Barbara Borst), detailed an amazing story about Easter Island. Titled "Unraveling one of Archaeology's Great Riddles" the article describes the work of one Bob McCurdy who—without any formal training in either history or archaeology, and without the benefit of research grants or travel money—came up with the solution to the "puzzling riddle" of the enormous stone statues on Easter Island.

McCurdy, a tree specialist, acquired some jewelry from a friend who claimed to have found it near Castle Rock, Colorado. It was cast of copper alloy in the shape of [he says] an elephant. He found a likeness to it in a photograph showing the headdress and breastplate worn by an Araucanian Indian shaman from Chile.

Elephants were the "key": these images are found, says McCurdy, in Chile, Mexico, and Easter Island, showing up in ancient Mayan carvings (see below), among the Araucanians of Chile and others in-between. Elephant bones were said to be discovered in Mayan ruins [no source for this bit of misinformation is given] and the motifs appear in the religious and ceremonial dress of these people. McCurdy pieced the story together: It seems that Kublai Khan sent two armadas to invade Japan and twice his ships were scattered over the Pacific by typhoons. In 1283 he lost some 6,000 ships, some carrying armored war elephants. Ships are sometimes pushed across the Pacific to North or South America. Ergo: McCurdy claims that the ships landed in South America and then sailed westward to Easter Island, naturally bringing along the elephants.

I would like to assure the reader that there is no evidence for elephants in either Central or South America, or Easter Island. As for his mention of elephants in Mayan carvings, McCurdy seemingly picked up on an old diffusionist theory from the late 1800s. Many such theories attribute American Indian civilizations to Egypt, or derive the Egyptian civilization from America, as believed the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg and Augustus Le Plongeon—these two were major nut cases: the Abbé was convinced that Atlantean colonists were behind it all.



by Niko Wilkins

If we can have Godzilla in New York, why not elephants on Easter Island?

One of the most tenacious believers that civilization arose only once and in the Nile Valley, and then spread throughout the world, was Dr G. Elliot Smith. He, along with William J. Perry, made sweeping statements involving all sorts of "evidence" from all over the world. Their most celebrated bone of contention was about some figures carved at the Maya ruins of Copan. Smith, Perry, and others claimed the carvings represented elephants with turbaned mahouts perched on their heads. Mayan scholars from Harvard determined this motif to be a macaw design that became progressively more stylized. As further evidence, McCurdy added that Heyerdahl demonstrated how easy it was to sail to Easter Island, with the "strong current from South America." [Note: The Kon Tiki expedition landed in

amazing theories and wild speculations

the Tuamotus, hundreds of miles to the north, not on Easter Island. The strong current—the Humboldt Current—goes north along the coast from South America, not west.]

Ah, but there is more: the Chinese of Kublai Khan's army brought expertise in stone cutting and building large monuments to Easter Island, and used the elephants to carry out their schemes. They put the islanders to work building the statues.

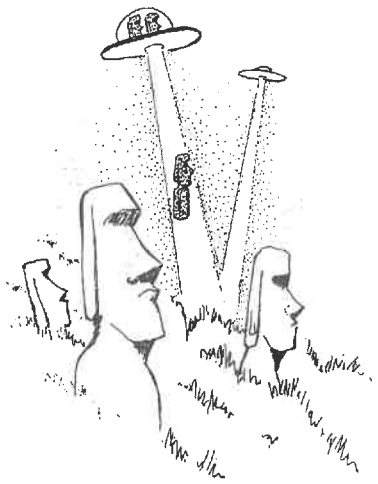
McCurdy, who has never been to Easter Island, is unconvinced that the statues were moved on skids or runners. As for why the work stopped, he cites the legend of an old woman who ordered the statues to fall down. He conjectures that she ordered or tricked the elephants into running off the island's cliffs where they perished on the rocks below. At last word, McCurdy was planning to write a book and was making plans for a documentary film.

[Note: There is no evidence for either Chinese or elephants having been on Easter Island. If McCurdy's book/film ever materializes, it can join some other bizarre films made in recent years. If we can have Godzilla in New York, why not elephants on Easter Island?]

SPACE TRAVELERS

I received a provocative letter in 1993 from a Mr. H.T.B., who informed me that he had been working on a book that he has tentatively titled "Why the Dinosaurs built the Pyramids." He wrote: The book ". . . *involves the consideration of many large monuments. However, when I switched to thinking of large monuments that the Dinosaurs did* not *build, then the Easter Island monuments are front runners and in fact unique. Like Stone Henge [sic] they are altogether too big to make just for the fun of it. One aspect of Easter Island that I consider provides the answer is the area of obsidian pieces. I think that the island has been a rest and recreation station for space travelers, who would have been not less than six years non-stop in space, perhaps acclimatization would be a more appropriate description. I believe that the visits would have been going on over a period of one or two million years.*

According to one book Captain Cook was firmly of the opinion that the statues were not made or erected



by the locals nor their predecessors.

[I hasten to assure the reader that neither Stonehenge nor the Easter Island statues were made for "the fun of it." Obsidian is found in many places throughout the world, including Easter Island, and what has that to do with space voyagers? Captain Cook did not see the statue quarry, and spent very little time on the island due to illness and the lack of available provisions on the island. He arrived at a low point in the island's culture and mistakenly thought it had always been that way].

The letter continues:

I think that the famous person that they commemorate would have been a space traveler who lost his eyesight when evading a "black hole".

When visits by other parties followed, and the carving of stone had become tradition, the basic removal of a block was carried out with a blow torch or thermal lance, producing a total surface of obsidian that all had to be chipped off.

[Any traveler who tangled with a black hole would have far more problems than losing his/her eyesight. Mr. H.T.B. seems unaware that completed statues placed on *ahu* had eyes carved in the faces, and many had inlaid eyes of coral with scoria pupils placed in the depressions. His 'blind' reference seems to have come from seeing pictures of unfinished statues.

The statues were carved from volcanic tuff with basalt tools, the marks of which are still clearly visible in the quarry. The tools used by those ancient Rapanui can still be found lying around the quarry area. Obsidian does not occur at the statue quarry and is certainly not found as a "surface on the statues". Although I have no clue as to what a "thermal lance" might be, I can vouch for the fact that stone tools were used exclusively by the Easter Islanders who lacked any kind of metal.]

The letter continues:

So why did our space travelers scatter the debris over 200 acres or so? One answer could be to use the glossy effect to reflect enough sunshine to act as a beacon for the next arrivals, due in a hundred years or so. The second possibility is that they were reproducing conditions on their home planet with the purpose of a quick crop. One remembers that the Romans sowed radishes whenever they were to be camped for forty days. There is also the possibility of the dew effect and the aspect of covering the ground to reduce evaporation. I would very much like your comments.

[Obsidian is found at two places on the island, neither of which is anywhere near the statue quarry; in fact, one is the tiny islet of Motu Iti, off

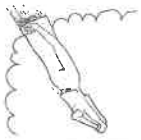
the southwest corner of the island and the other is Maunga Orito at the western side of the island.]

TIME TRAVELERS

A letter arrived from Australia in 1989, giving a bit of insight into the way time/distance is disregarded by many would-be writers:

Do you have a time scale of the stone circles? Also a place of interest, about which you may have information is Amapa in South America. My project is to produce a manuscript, descriptively titled The Anglo-Ayrian Heritage; Artifacts from the Holocene. Origins of Literacy and Numeracy [sic] *in Ancient Astronomy.*

[There are no stone circles on Easter Island. There are a few *paina* where feasts were held. Although these are circular, they are quite small, and composed of small beach cobbles, very low to the ground. They date from around 1500 A.D., some 10,000 years off in time from the Holocene.]



RONGORONGO TABLETS

Rongorongo tablets have been a fertile area for speculation, for one can read nearly anything into the small engraved images on wooden tablets. A goodly amount of literature has described them as being linked to the undeciphered script of the Indus Valley, Egyptian hieroglyphics, ancient Sumerian, Chinese, and many other writings, despite the thousands of years difference in time and the huge distances that separate them. One creative writer from India sent the following letter about "fish people and hoo-heads" in 1994:

The stele with hieroglyphs from Easter Island with its megalithic tradition which is linked with megalithic traditions at the opposite ends of the world, draws into question the nature of the hieroglyphs. Do these have any connections with the architects of stonehenge megaliths in great Britain? We are aware that an unknown race of megalith builders (around 1500 B.C.) incircled [sic] *the entire globe, and left a tradition of megaliths from England to India, Indonesia to the South Pacific. The handling of such huge stones in monumental arrangements as places of worship and archaeoastronomical observatories and burial of chiefs speaks of an advanced people. The megaliths throughout the globe are in a fried* [sic] *pattern between which lie the yet undiscovered "solar cities" and futurists connect the culture with extraterrestrials.*

The thirteen lines of hieroglyphs in the Easter Island stele [there are no stele on Easter Island; the author is referring to rongorongo tablets] *presents us with a story left for us to interpret. . . . In choosing to interpret a small part of it here I will "read" from line 6: it shows a dancing and screaming figure with both hands raised followed by another. Heads are similar to the earliest portrayal in rock art in India and Australia, described as "hoo headed" (1500 B.C.). . . .Then we see a striking depiction of a fish from whose stem grows out a stem which becomes a five petaled* [sic] *lotus* [there are no lotus plants on Easter Island]. *This is of great interest since the very same motif appears in present day Khovar painting in the tribal areas of Hazsaribagh!*

We see the fish and lotus repeated, and two large birds with prehistoric form and enormous wing span. The legends of the Santals of Hazaribagh tell of the appears [sic]

of two such birds when land was being made. These two birds will lay the eggs on the newly formed land and from these eggs man and woman will be born. Now comes an anthropomorph figure its head that of the grasshopper. Now, in the prehistoric rock art of Hazaribagh as well as in the ancient genesis legends of the Aboriginies [sic] *of Australia the great horned grasshopper, signal of the rains, is a creator hero spirit. . . .What follows seems to be a boat, and then again the fish and lotus symbol. In the subsequent panel we see the evolution of the monkey as if trying to tell us something across the abyss of time.*

There [is] . . . a Tree of life and fish . . . followed by frog anthropomorph ... a flying fish and a dancing merman. . . . Obviously the Easter Island hieroglyphs have a message and that message is particularly linked with India, the land that even Today worships the lotus as the symbol of deity.

[Note: There is no connection between Stonehenge and Easter Island. There are neither monkeys, nor grasshoppers on Easter Island. While I am unsure as to what a "hoo head" may be, I am unaware of any of these on Easter Island, either. What is "obvious" here is that the writer's train of thought is hard to follow and a bit muddled. However, we can affirm that there is no connection between India and Easter Island.]

LASER BEAMS & HOLOGRAMS

In a review of a book by Tom Gary called "*An Amateur Psychic Speaks Out; With an Easter Island Theory*" (*Consumer Beacon,* Texas, for 2 August 1978), we read the following: "Gary became interested in Easter Island in 1971, but has never been there, '. . . at least not in this life,' he states in his book." After reading *The Power of Hypnosis* by Hans Holzer, he found a clue to his memory of Easter Island.

The Review continues by quoting Gary:

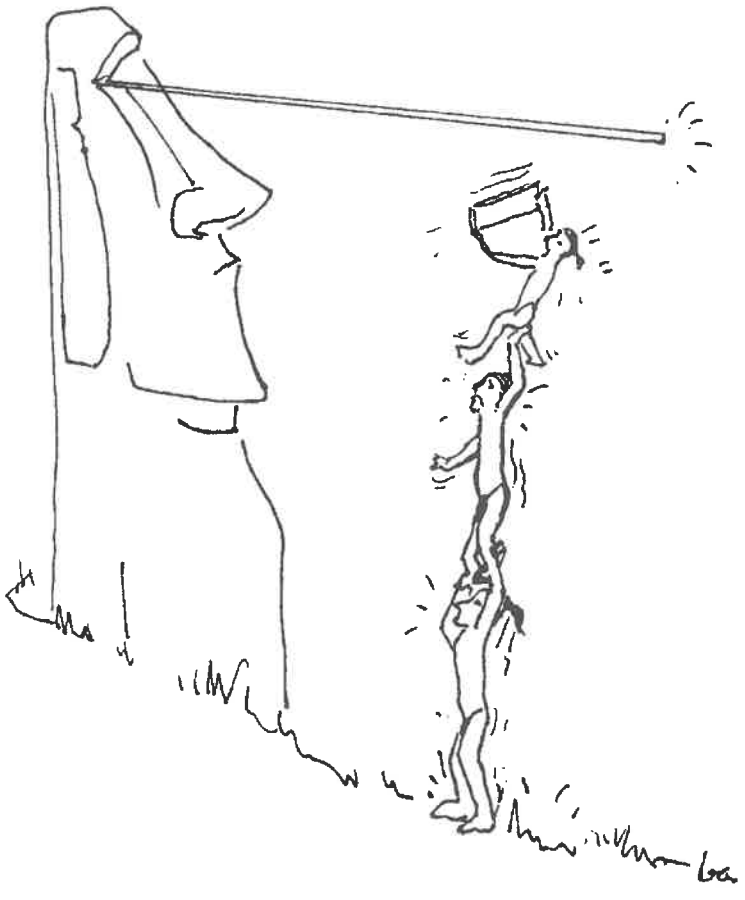
This was the explanation I was looking for. I was not allowed to fulfill the task given me on Easter Island. My life ended unexpectedly, when the work on the statues stopped.

Another newspaper interviewer added:

[Gary] . . . is fascinated by the mysteries of the world that puzzle scientists. The focus of his attention started and still remains at Easter Island. . . . But unlike most people who have studied the island, Gary believes he has insight into the mystery of Easter Island. Because of its location, he believes the island could have been a kind of central energy plant from which energy was transmitted to other locations in Mexico and South America. Gary suggests that the still undeciphered inscriptions on hundreds of boards found on the island offer the answer to the Easter Island mysteries, and that a diagram on the backs of some of the giant statues offers the key to unlocking the message on the boards.

As far back as 1961, he felt he had memories of Easter Island. . . 'I had a feeling I was seeing something that was familiar to me,' he recalls. 'I had never heard of Easter Island. I told my wife that I knew those statues were used in connection with rays of particles coming through them.'

When Gary saw a picture of the rongo-rongo boards found on the island, he says he again felt he knew what he was seeing. 'I have become



obsessed with those boards.... If they are what I say they are, the diagram (on the backs of the statues) will lead to a copying machine that will copy in three dimensions.

[The statues do not have diagrams on their backs. Some have designs, but these reflect the aesthetics of the island's art and are believed to represent the sacred hami (loincloths) worn by chiefs. And just what one would copy in 3-D is not clear. People?]

[Gary] believes the diagram is a blueprint for building a viewer that can read the inscriptions on the boards. His theory is that all previous efforts to decipher the inscriptions have failed because they are not words. Instead they are three-dimensional pictures printed in three colors. Gary says the exact, repeated patterns and the fact that the pictures extend off the edges of the boards is evidence they were printed with a machine, not by hand.

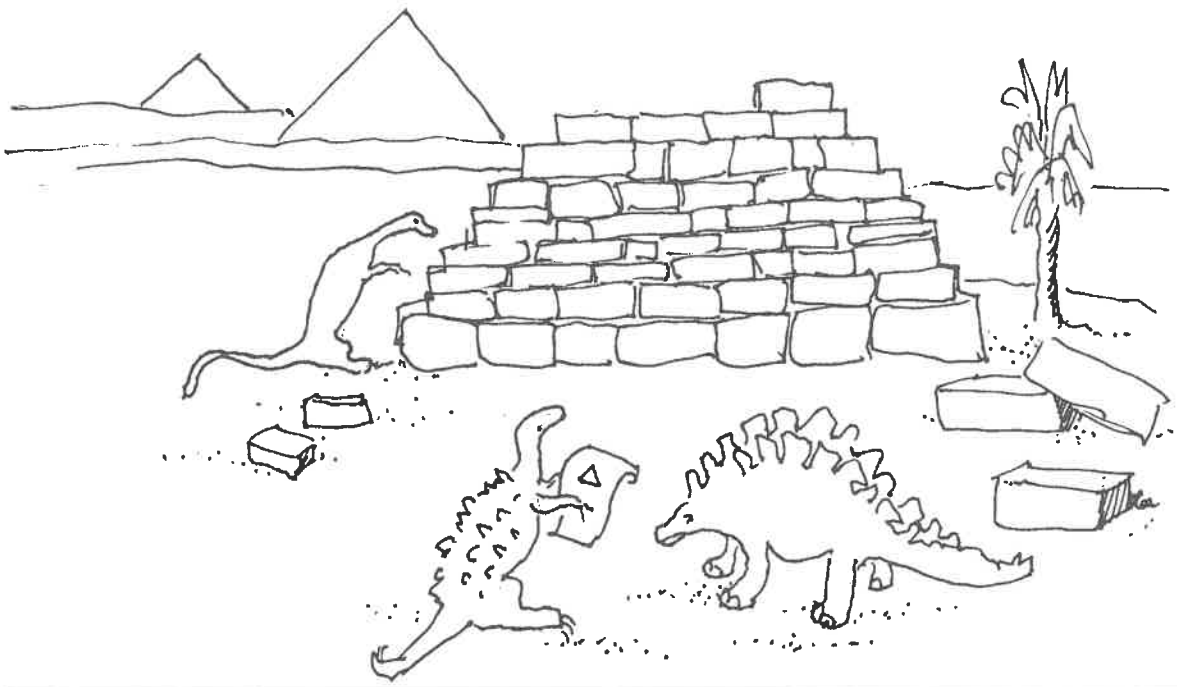
[None of the *rongorongo* tablets have any color. The designs are not "exact repeated patterns" but vary widely from figure to figure, and from tablet to tablet. The *rongorongo* motifs were carved on pieces of wood using either sharks' teeth or small burins of obsidian.]

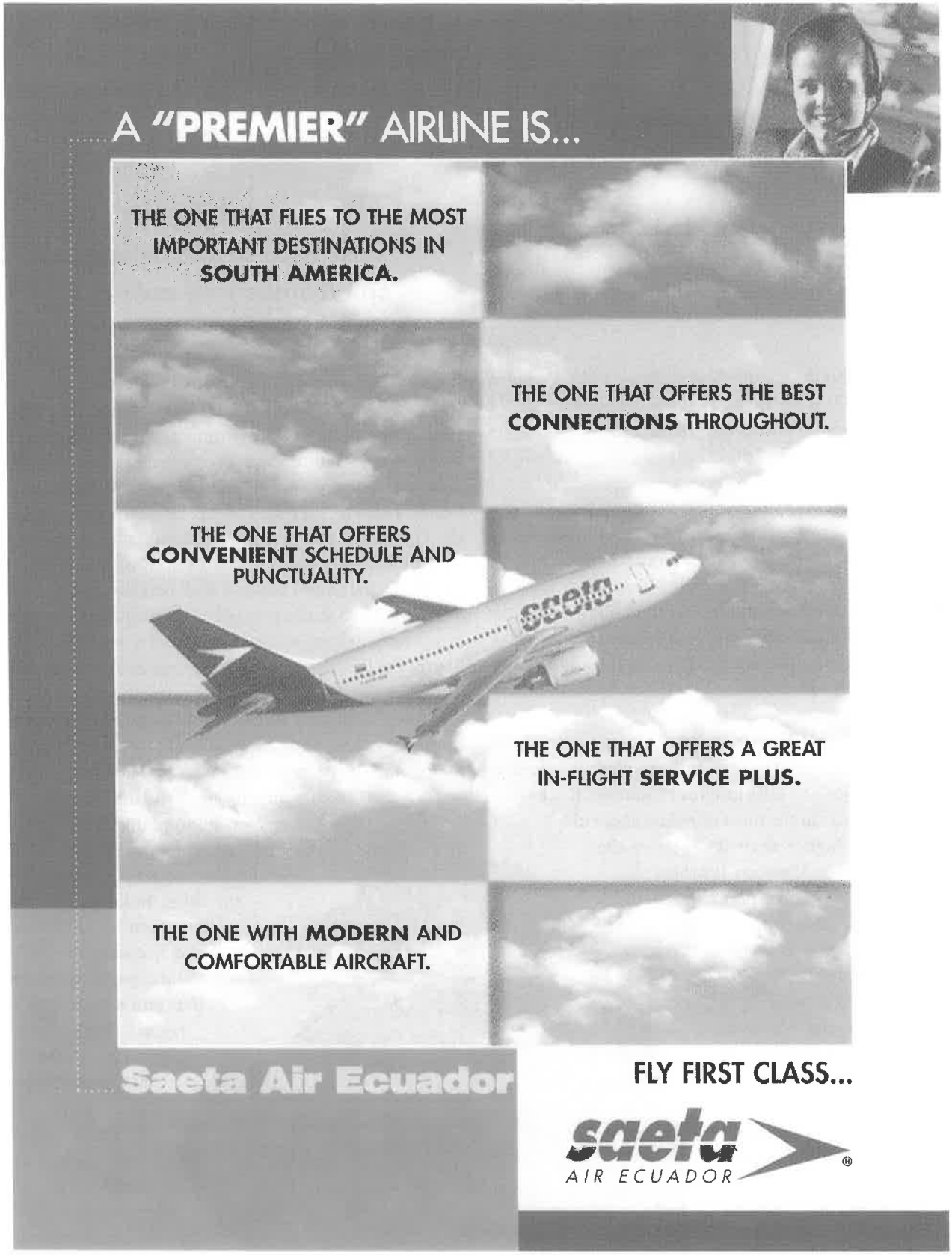
[Gary] believes that with the viewer, unscrambled pictures—or a type of hologram—will emerge from the boards. 'The most important thing I need is to find an optical physicist who can build the viewer,' he says. (*Beaumont Enterprise*, 13 June 1985: by staff writer Alice Nolan).

As we understand it from several truly amazing conversations with Mr Gary, his theory involves some unspecified power that he claims emanates from the island, passes up through the statues, and comes out of the statues' eyes in the form of laser beams. It was those beams, he told us, that carved the *rongorongo* script onto pieces of wood.

Gary sent his energy theories and other ideas to the government—but strangely, all have been ignored. Gary's book, which is dedicated to "God's Angels and His Saints" concludes by stating "*The Easter Island theory must reach others who will recognize its merit.*" He added that he found it very strange that neither government officials nor scientists would come to look at his evidence, and attributed this to 'academic snootiness.'

In the continuation of The Nutcase Chronicles (forthcoming, in Issues 56 and 57 of the *South American Explorer*), we will see that convictions such as Mr. Gary's, as well as the belief that scientists and officials ignore "non-academics", are fairly common. We will be looking next at the Lost Continent group; those who advocate extraterrestrial contacts; the "Catastrophic Event" crowd; and those who espouse superdiffusionist theories, seeing everything as connected in some way—usually to Egypt or Phoenicia.




A "PREMIER" AIRLINE IS...
THE ONE THAT FLIES TO THE MOST IMPORTANT DESTINATIONS IN SOUTH AMERICA.
THE ONE THAT OFFERS THE BEST CONNECTIONS THROUGHOUT.
THE ONE THAT OFFERS CONVENIENT SCHEDULE AND PUNCTUALITY.
saeta
THE ONE THAT OFFERS A GREAT IN-FLIGHT SERVICE PLUS.
THE ONE WITH MODERN AND COMFORTABLE AIRCRAFT.
Saeta Air Ecuador
FLY FIRST CLASS...
saeta
AIR ECUADOR

Alexander von Humboldt on Geophagy

Abstracted by V. M. Ponce

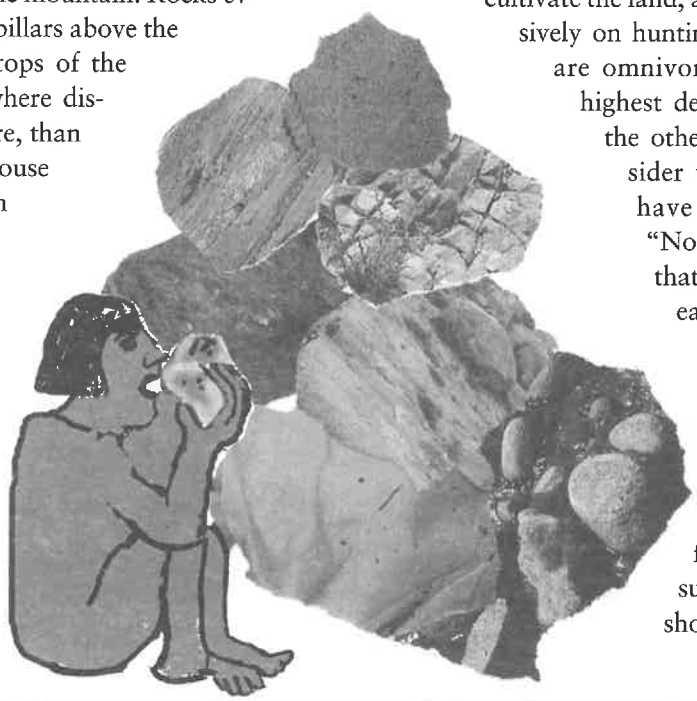
"Nothing is so disgusting that an Otomac will not eat it."

Source: Humboldt, A., and A. Bonpland. 1821. *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, During the Years 1799-1804.* AMS Press, Inc., New York, 1966.

The great German explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt was fascinated by the practice of some native American tribes populating the torrid zone to eat earth, mostly from want, but sometimes by choice or custom. What follows is an account by Humboldt himself of the geophagy of the Otomacs, a tribe inhabiting the banks of the Orinoco River. The setting is in what is now Venezuela, c. 1800.

The situation of the mission of Uruana is extremely picturesque. The little Indian village is placed at the foot of a lofty granitic mountain. Rocks everywhere appear in the form of pillars above the forest, rising higher than the tops of the higher trees. The Orinoco nowhere displays a more majestic aspect here, than when contemplated from the house of the missionary, Fray Ramon Bueno. It is more than five thousand meters wide, and runs without any winding, like a vast canal, straight toward the east. Two long and narrow islands (Isla de Uruana and Isla Vieja de la Manteca) contribute to give extent to the bed of the river; the two banks are parallel, and we cannot call it divided into different branches. The mission is inhabited by the Otomacs, a tribe in the rudest state, and presenting one of the most extraordinary physiological phenomena. The Otomacs eat earth; that is, they swallow every day, during several months, very considerable quantities, to appease hunger, without injuring their health. I also found traces of this vitiated appetite among the Guamoes; and between the confluence of the Meta and the Apure, where everybody speaks of geophagy as of a thing anciently known. I shall here confine myself to an account of what we ourselves saw, or heard from the missionary, whom an unhappy fatality had doomed to live for twelve years among the savage and turbulent tribe of the Otomacs.

The inhabitants of Uruana belong to those nations of the savannas, who, more difficult to civilize than the nations of the forest, have a decided aversion to cultivate the land, and live almost exclusively on hunting and fishing. They are omnivorous animals of the highest degree; and therefore, the other Indians, who consider them as barbarians, have a common saying: "Nothing is so disgusting that an Otomac will not eat it." While the waters of the Orinoco and its tributaries are low, the Otomac subsist on fish and turtles. The former they kill with surprising dexterity, by shooting them with an



arrow when they appear at the surface of the water. When the rivers swell, which occurs periodically in every part of the torrid zone, fishing ceases almost entirely. It is then as difficult to procure fish in the rivers which have become deeper, as when you are sailing on the open sea. At the period of these inundations, which last two or three months, the Otomacs swallow a prodigious quantity of earth. We found heaps of balls in their huts, piled up in pyramids three or four feet high. These balls were five or six inches in diameter. The earth, which the Otomacs eat, is a very fine and unctuous clay, of a yellowish gray color; and, being slightly baked in the fire, the hardened crust has a tint inclining to red, owing to the iron oxides which are mingled with it. The Otomacs do not eat every kind of clay indifferently; they choose the alluvial beds or strata that contain the most unctuous earth, and the smoothest to the feel. We examined the balls of earth and found no trace of any organic substance, whether oily or farinaceous. The savages regard everything that appeases hunger as nourishing; therefore, when you inquire of an Otomac on what he subsists during the two months when the river is highest, he shows you his balls of clayey earth. This he calls his principal food; for at this period he can seldom procure a lizard, a root of fern, or a dead fish at the surface of the water. If the Indian eats earth from want during two months, he does not less regale himself with it during the rest of the year. Every day in the season of drought, when fishing is most abundant, he scrapes his balls of *poya,* and mingles a little clay with his other aliment. What is most surprising is that the Otomacs do not become lean by swallowing such quantities of earth; they are, on the contrary, extremely robust, and far from having the belly tense and puffed up. The missionary Fray Ramon Bueno asserts that he never observed any alteration in the health of the natives at the period of the great risings of the Orinoco.

the Otomacs swallow a prodigious quantity of earth.

The following are the facts in all their simplicity, which we were able to ascertain. The Otomacs during some months eat daily three quarter of a pound of clay slightly hardened by fire, without their health being sensibly affected by it. They moisten the earth afresh, when they are going to swallow it. It has not been possible to verify hitherto with precision how much nutritious vegetable or animal matter the Indians take in a week at the same time; but it is certain that they attribute the sensation of satiety, which they feel, to the clay, and not to the wretched aliments which they take with it occasionally.

an inordinate and almost irresistible desire of swallowing earth

I observed everywhere within the torrid zone, in a great number of individuals, children, women, and sometimes even full grown men, an inordinate and almost irresistible desire of swallowing earth; not an alkaline or calcareous earth, to neutralize (as it is vulgarly said) acid juices, but a fat clay, unctuous, and exhaling a strong smell. It is often found necessary to tie the children's hands, or to confine them, to prevent their eating earth, when the rain ceases to fall. At the village of Banco, on the bank of the river Magdalena, I saw the Indian women who make pottery continually swallowing great pieces of clay.

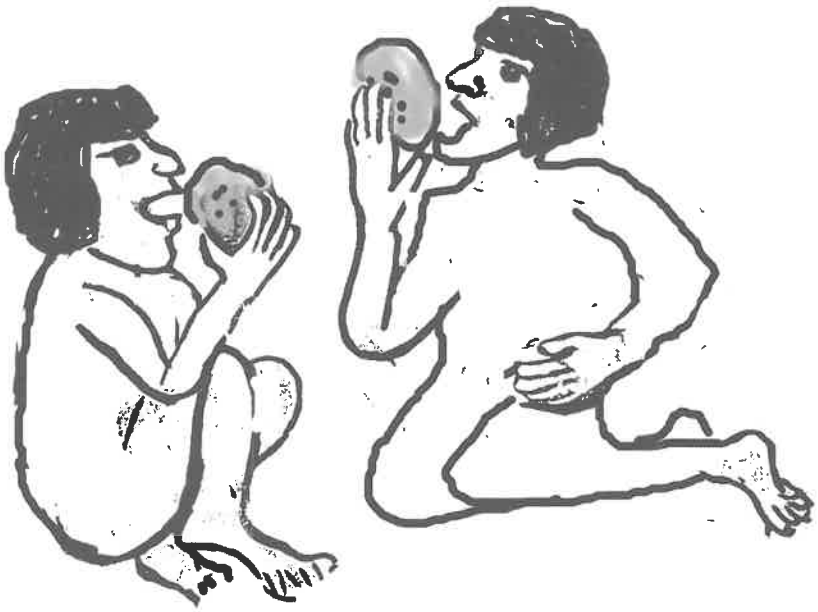
It is often found necessary to tie the children's hands to prevent their eating earth

These women were not in a state of pregnancy; and they affirmed that "earth is an aliment, which they do not find hurtful." In other American tribes people soon fall sick, and waste away, when they yield too much to this mania of eating earth. We found at the Mission of San Borja an Indian child of the Guahiba nation, who was as thin as a skeleton. The mother informed us that the little girl was reduced to this lamentable state of atrophy in consequence of a disorderly appetite, having refused dur-

ing four months to take almost any food other than clay. Yet San Borja is only twenty-five leagues from Uruana, inhabited by the Otomacs, who, from the effect no doubt of a habit progressively acquired, swallow the *poya* without exhibiting any pernicious effects. Father Gumilla asserts that the Otomacs purge themselves with oil, or rather with the melted fat of the crocodile, when they feel any gastric obstructions; but the missionary whom we found among them was little disposed to confirm this assertion. It may be asked why the mania of eating earth is much more rare in the frigid and temperate zones than in the torrid; and why in Europe it is found only among women in a state of pregancy, and sickly children.

In the Indian archipelago, at the island of Java, Mr. Labillardière saw, between Surabaya and Samarang, little square and reddish cakes exposed to sale. These cakes, called taanampo, were cakes of clay, slightly baked, which the natives eat with appetite. The attention of physiologists, since my return from the Orinoco, having been powerfully fixed on this phenomena of geophagy, Mr. Leschenault (one of the naturalists of the expedition to the Southern Lands under Captain Baudin) has published some curious details on the *taanampo*, or *ampo*, of the Javanese. "The reddish and somewhat ferruginous clay," he says, "which the inhabitants of Java are fond of eating occasionally, is spread on a plate of iron, and baked, after having been rolled into little cylinders in the form of the bark of cinnamon. In this state, it takes the name of *ampo*, and it is sold in the public markets. In general, it is only the Javanese women who eat the ampo, either in the time of their pregnancy, or in order to grow thin; the want of plumpness being a kind of beauty in this country. The use of this earth is fatal to health; the women lose their appetite imperceptibly, and no longer take without disgust a small quantity of food; but the desire of becoming lean, and of preserving a slender shape, can brave these dangers and maintain the credit of the *ampo*."

When we reflect on the whole of these facts, we perceive that this disorderly appetite for clayey, magnesian, and calcareous earth, is most common among the people of the torrid zone; that it is not always a cause of disease; and that some tribes eat earth from choice, while others

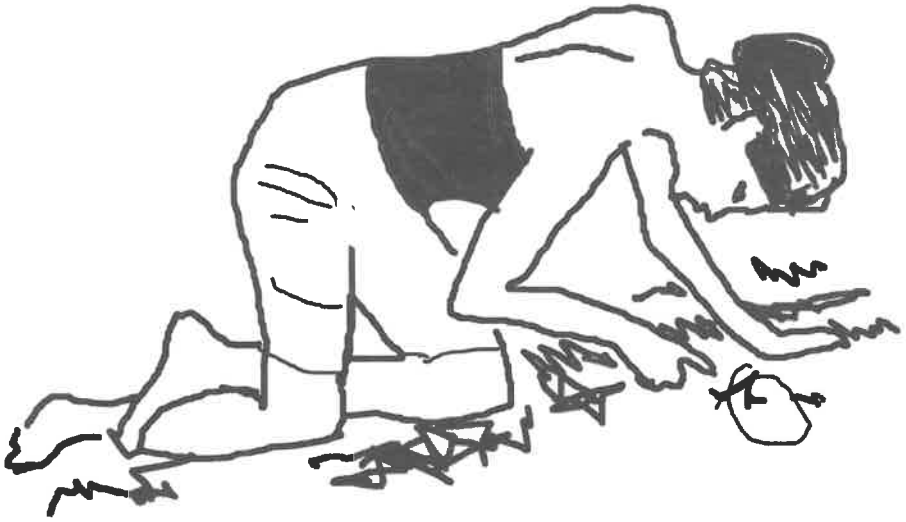


like the Otomacs eat it from want, and to appease hunger. A great number of physiological phenomena prove that a temporary cessation of hunger may be produced, without the substances that are submitted to the organs of digestion being, properly speaking, nutritive.The earth of the Otomacs, composed of alumina and silica, furnished probably nothing, or almost nothing to the composition of the organs of man. These organs contain lime and magnesia in the bones, in the lymph of the thoraxic duct, in the coloring matter of blood, and in white hairs; they afford very small quantities of silica in black hair; and but a few atoms of alumina in the bones, though this is contained abundantly in the greater part of vegetable matters, which form part of our nourishment. It is not the same with man as with animated beings placed lower in the scale of organization. In man, assimilation is exerted only on those substances that enter essentially into the composition of the bones, the muscles, and the medullary matter of the nerves and brain. Plants, on the contrary, draw from the soil the salts that are found accidentally mixed in it; and their fibrous texture varies according to the nature of the earths that predominate in the spots which they inhabit. An object well worthy of research, and which has longed fixed my attention, is the small number of simple subtances that enter into the composition of animated beings, and which alone appear fit-

ted to maintain what we call the chemical movement of vitality.

The state of perfect health enjoyed by the Otomacs...is a phenomenon difficult to explain.

When the missions of the Orinoco shall become more frequented by enlightened travelers, the number of days will be determined with precision, during which the Otomacs can subsist without adding to the clay they swallow any other aliment from the vegetable or animal kingdom. A considerable portion of gastric and pancreatic juice must be employed to digest, or rather, to envelope and expel with the fecal matter so great a quantity of clay. We may conceive that the secretion of these juices is augmented by the presence of earths in the stomach and intestines; but how does it happen that such abundant secretions do not cause at length a feeling of exhaustion? The state of perfect health enjoyed by the Otomacs during the time when they use little muscular exercise and are subject to so extraordinary a regimen is a phenomenon difficult to explain. It can be attributed only to a habit, prolonged from generation to generation. Man can accustom himself to an extraordinary abstinence, and find it but little painful, if he employs tonic or stimulating substances, or if he supplies his stomach from time to time with earthy, insipid substances, that are not in themselves fit for nutrition. Like man in a savage state, some animals also, when pressed by hunger in winter, swallow clay or other friable steatites. Mr. Bonpland and I observed in a crocodile, eleven feet long, which we dissected at Batalley, on the banks of the Rio Magdalena, that the stomach of this reptile contained fish half digested, and rounded fragments of granite three of four inches in diameter. It is difficult to admit that the crocodiles swallow these stony masses accidentally, for they do not catch fish with their lower jaw resting on the ground at the bottom of the river. The Indians have framed the absurd hypothesis, that these indolent animals like to augment their weight, that they may have less trouble in diving. I rather think that they load their stomach with large pebbles to excite an abundant secretion of gastric juice. The experiments of Mr. Magendie render this explanation extremely probable. With respect to the habit of the granivorous birds, particularly the gallinaceœ and ostriches, of swallowing sand and small pebbles, it has been hitherto attributed to an instinctive desire to accelerating the trituration of the aliments in a muscular and thick stomach.



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Letters, continued from page 4.

and was slain by the Natives (thirty five arrows!). Göhring survived the trip and was nursed back to health in Paucartambo by the great-aunt of a friend of mine, Rodolfo Bragagnini.

When Göhring recovered, he wrote his *Informe Supremo* and presented a copy to the president of the Republic as well as to Rodolfo's aunt. The book to the Paucartambo aunt was eventually lost.

Juan Mejia Baca was aware of the book and told me that he, too, had sought Göhring's Paucartambo *Informe*. However, Don Juan insisted the *Informe* was not in his Biblioteca Nacional. I felt sure that it was, told him so and suggested how to find it. I found three copies, using an obscure reference.

I made a copy of Göhring's book and delivered it to the Bragagninis, for which they were very grateful. I also discovered, quite by surprise, the old Machu Picchu map.

The text of the book mentions the ruins of "Picchus," and the map shows both "Machu" and "Huayna" Picchu, although Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu were reversed.

I told Dan Buck of the Göhring map and book. Soon afterwards, Dan wrote the article for the Club magazine on the "oldest known map of Machu Picchu."

However, here is where the plot thickens. Many years ago, I also found a reference to the "Torontoy Estate."

The Torontoy or Cercada-de-San Antonio Estate in southern Peru was the property of Colonel Aucusto R. Berns. It may have encompassed the site of Machu Picchu. Apparently there were other ruins, perhaps not yet well known (from my notes: *Ruta Imperio De Los Incas*; "Aunque impone por su tamaño y perfección, cerca de Machu Picchu, en las ruinas de Torontoy hay un bloque que la supera; tiene nada menos que 44 ángulos sobre un solo plano.").

Colonel Berns's involvement in the area predated Göhring's expedtion by a few years and I wondered if Göhring had learned of the "Picchus" from his fellow German. I now think not, since their maps are not similar enough. (Although, Antonio Raimondi apparently did take note of Göhring, since his fabulous 1887 map of Peru shows "Cerro Machu Picchu" traced in nearly the same location as Göhring's, albeit with less detail.)

What is more interesting is Berns' claims concerning the region, an area which was, in Bern's words, "undoubtedly the source and center of the mineral wealth of the ancient Incas of Peru."

While searching for Latin American collections in the U.S. in the 1970's, I noted the Torontoy citation. It was a brief note and only caught my eye for its proximity to Machu Picchu. Later, I lost track of the location. Only last year did I rediscover where the papers resided, in time to learn that the Torontoy Estate Collection was passed back to Peru, to the Biblioteca Nacional!

However, from a separate source, I found that a few of Berns' papers and maps of the region had filtered down through one of his backers; and were for sale! I now have a copy of them.

Incredibly, the Berns maps do indicate the whereabouts of various ancient "Portugese" silver and gold mines and Inca ruins not too distant from Machu Picchu, but Berns did not indicate Machu Picchu itself.

Off and on, for twenty years I have researched and explored in Peru. I am intimate with the Inambari river in the high jungle of northern Puno but I know so little concerning other areas.

Of course, I am wont to think that other esteemed South American Explorers Club members are well aware of these ruins of the Torontoy Estate and their associated mines.

Yet, I am compelled to ask. What does the Club and *socios* know of these "rich deposits of silver ore" noted on Berns' 1868 map, opposite the Urubamba from Machu Picchu? Has anyone heard of an ancient tunnel in Putucussy Chico alleged to contain the bodies of the Incas? Or the "well paved road with massive flights of steps from Putucussy to the towns of the metal workers"?

Or is this now just the site of some "Putucussy Kareoke" and I am the last to know?

Paolo Greer

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Ask the Doctor

Dr. Joseph Breault graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine with combined MD and MPHTM (Tropical Medicine) degrees. Currently the staff physician at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, he has previously worked at the PHS Indian Hospitals in South Dakota and overseas in the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

Immunizations

Q: I'm planning an extended trip in South America to visit a number of countries. I haven't settled on the exact itinerary yet, but it will involve a good bit of rural and jungle travel. What immunizations do I need? How many weeks before the trip do I need to get them?

A: In tropical South America, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends you see your doctor at least 4 to 6 weeks before your trip to allow time for immunizations to take effect. They recommend you receive:

1. Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).

2. Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay more than six months in the region, or be exposed through medical treatment.

3. Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.

4. Typhoid, particularly if you plan to visit rural areas or stay longer than 6 weeks.

5. Yellow fever vaccination, if you will be traveling outside urban areas.

6. As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles.

For more information, see http://www.cdc.gov/travel/tropsam.htm.

The ideal timing to be immunized for Hepatitis B (a series of 3 shots) is 6 months before you leave, so if it is at all possible to see your doctor this early before the trip, please do so. If your childhood immunizations have not been completed, these need to be done before your trip.

Q: Are immunizations just recommended or are they required?

A: Most are recommended. Only the yellow fever vaccination is required in most of tropical South America. However, a doctor's waiver stating yellow fever vaccination is contraindicated can be obtained if the traveler is an infant under 4 months or severely allergic to eggs. If you're a pregnant or immunocompromised traveler (e.g., HIV, cancer chemotherapy, receiving corticosteroids) headed for a country which requires a yellow fever immunization, but you aren't going to an area where there is known yellow fever transmission, get a waiver. An immunocompromised traveler should still get the yellow fever vaccine if he is traveling in areas where it is being transmitted. The details of each country's requirements can be accessed on the internet at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm.

Q: What about smallpox?

A: It has been eradicated and only exists in laboratories. No country requires immunization. Smallpox vaccine is not available for general use.

Q: What if I'm pregnant?

A: Live virus vaccines should be avoided during pregnancy due to the theoretical risk to the developing fetus. This includes measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines. If there is a substantial risk of infection, then yellow fever and oral polio can be used but should be delayed until after the first trimester if possible. Live bacterial vaccines (e.g. oral typhoid vaccine) have not been studied in pregnancy and their safety is unknown and should be avoided while pregnant. Tetanus-diptheria boosters (dT) are usually considered safe, if needed. Women can receive immunizations and breast feed without problems.

Q: What about getting vaccines if I'm HIV positive?

A: HIV positive individuals should not get oral typhoid or oral polio vaccines. As stated above, yellow fever vaccine should be avoided unless you are traveling in an area where there is known transmission; otherwise get a waiver from your doctor for this requirement if you are traveling in countries that require it.

Q: If I get the rabies series before I leave, what happens if a dog bites me in South America?

A: Rabies is a serious problem in underdeveloped countries, so you should presume the worst after a bite. If you had your pre-trip vaccination series (3 shots), you will need 2 more

after the bite. Note that the newer, better vaccine used in the U.S. (HDCV=human diploid cell vaccine, brand name Imovax) is quite expensive and may not be available where you are traveling. Most U.S. embassies have information on the availability of appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis in the country of interest, and you should contact them immediately.

Q: Any risks from getting immunizations?

A: A common minor side effect to most of the vaccines mentioned is pain at the injection site for 1-2 days. After receiving the typhoid injectable vaccine, you may also experience fever, headache and malaise for 1-2 days; the Vi version of the typhoid injectable can cause diarrhea, anorexia, and vomiting; the oral typhoid can cause GI upset, fever and headache.

Serious side effects to vaccines are rare. If you have serious allergies to aluminum phosphate, aluminum hydroxide, eggs, formaldehyde, neomycin, phenol red, phenol, polymyxin B, streptomycin, thimerosal, or toxoid then you may not be able to take one or more of the recommended vaccines.

Q: Where can I get the less common vaccinations (typhoid, yellow fever) that my family doctor does not have?

A: See the resources listed under "Travel Clinics" in South American Explorer Issue 54 (Winter 1998), p32.

Q: Where can I look up more about immunizations?

A: Internet websites that are useful include:

http://www.intmed.mcw.edu/travel.html

http://www.aafp.org/afp/980800ap/dick.html

You can e-mail medical questions to Dr. Breault at joebreault@worldnet.att.net. Although the questions cannot be answered personally, a selection of questions will be answered and published in future issues of the South American Explorer.

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Check out the major renovations to the South American Explorers Club web page! It's now easier than ever to find information and order books, maps, and other goods. Coming soon: Thousands of trip reports at your fingertips! Using Adobe Acrobat, members can enter keywords like "Cusco," "textiles," or "Cotopaxi." Acrobat will find the scanned trip reports and let you read them on-line.

Easter Island

NOVA: Secrets of Easter Island

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/easter

A gorgeous site on Easter Island with information and pictures of locales like Ahu Akivi, Ahu Tahai, Anakena Beach, Orongo, and Rano Raraku. Focuses on theories on how the famous megaliths were moved, with info on past attempts, recent field tests by anthropologists, an on-line Shockwave game called "Move the *Moai*" and an area to submit your theories on *moai* transportation.

Easter Island Home Page

http://www.netaxs.com/~trance/rapanui.html

Yes, we know we highlighted this site in Issue 54, but if Georgia Lee's article (p. 14) piques your interest in Easter Island, don't miss this site. The most comprehensive site on Rapa Nui out there, with info on language, *moai*, archaeology, petroglyphs, Rongorongo script, music, tatooing, how to get there, dance, and the Easter Island Foundation.

Sangay Volcano

The Mountain Tapir

http://www.tapirback.com/andes/keystone.htm

Learn all about the endangered Mountain Tapir, found in small populations in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru (in the Sangay National Park). More about the tapir's habitat, conservation and research efforts, and tapirs in zoos.

Climbing Sangay

http://members.tripod.com/~franschi17/

Why climb Sangay? When's the best time? How do I get there? What gear do I need? What's the route like? Do I need a guide? The answer to all these questions is in this site created by François Panchard, author of the sidebar on page 55. In both French and English.

Alexander Von Humboldt on Geophagy

Alexander Von Humboldt

http://ecomod.tamu.edu/ecomod/alexhumb.html

http://www.rz.hu-berlin.de/hub/geschichte/alex_e.html

Two informative sites on Alexander von Humboldt, best known for his exploration of the Venezuelan coast, the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers, and parts of present-day Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Mexico. Both web sites outline his research in mineralogy, astronomy and forestry.

The York University Geophagy (Soil Ingestion) Research Project

http://www.atkinson.yorku.ca/home/department/geog/geophage.html

Just read Victor Ponce's abstract of Humboldt on dirt-eating tribes (p. 22)? Learn more about current studies by York University Research researchers on soil ingestion in cattle, monkeys, and people in South America.

Peru Desert Adventure

Paracas National Reserve

http://www3.rcp.net.pe/peru/ica/paracas.html

The Paracas National Reserve, one of the most important marine reserves in the world, covers more than 335,000 hectares of land and sea. Browse this site for information on this area's fauna (condors, sea lions, flamingoes), practical tourist information, and a map of the reserve.

Peru's Bat-Cactus Connection

http://www.batcon.org/batsmag/v13n3-2.html

Catherine Sahley's site on her study of the nectar-feeding long-nosed bat found only in desert habitats in western Peru. She investigates the role of bats as the key pollinators of columnar cacti in the area around Arequipa.

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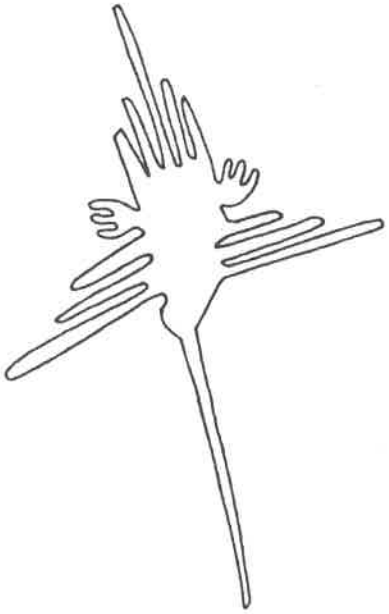

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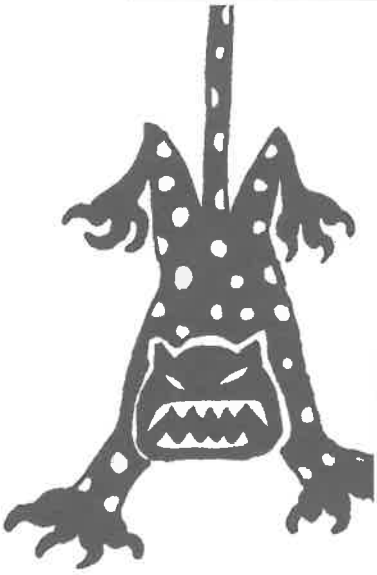

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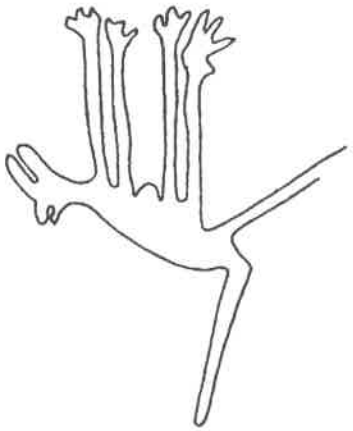

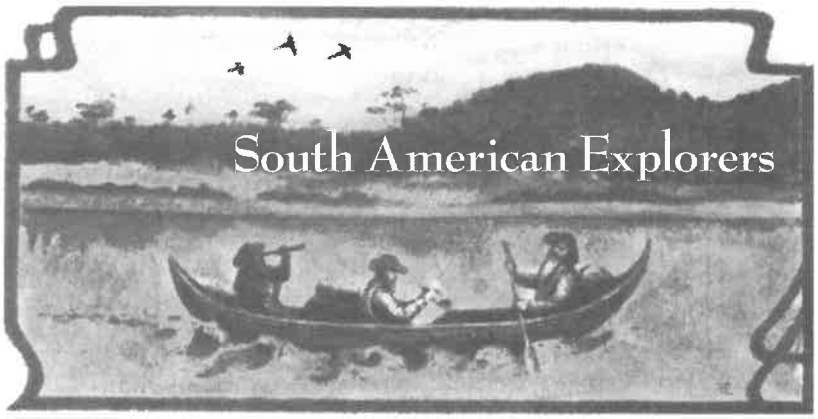

James Orton

by Daniel Buck

In 1921, some three to four thousand people gathered on Isla Esteves in Lake Titicaca's Bay of Puno for the unveiling of a nine-foot, Inca-style pillar memorializing James Orton, an American scientist-explorer once known as "el Humboldt estadounidense."

When the Smithsonian Institution sponsored a scientific expedition in 1867, Orton began a series of adventures in the wilds of South America—adventures that would both change the course of his life and end it prematurely. At the last minute, the designated leader of the expedition backed out, and Orton—then teaching at Rochester University—was recruited to take his place. After landing at Guayaquil, he and his team mounted the Andes to Quito, descended to the Oriente, and boated down the Napo and the Amazon to Pará. Orton returned home with crates of animal, geological, and plant specimens.

On his second mission, in 1873, he navigated up the Amazon from Pará to Iquitos. ("This work is not written to encourage emigration to Brazil," he cautioned. "I advise those who can get an honest living in the United States to stay there."). From Iquitos, he slogged on to Moyobamba ("as famous for its execrable roads as for its hats"), Chachapoyas, Cajamarca, and down to the Pacific Coast ("Whichever route the traveler takes, he wishes he had taken another."). He continued on to Lima, and finished his trip with a visit to Arequipa, Puno, and Lake Titicaca.

There remain only scattered second-hand accounts of his third and final journey, which began early in 1877. Orton came into the Beni region from La Paz, accompanied by Ivon Heath, brother of American explorer Edwin Heath, intending to pioneer an ascent of the Río Beni, but a mutiny by his crew, coupled with his failing health, forced him to pack it in. He died on September 25 at age 47, while sailing across Lake Titicaca on his way home, and was buried on Isla Esteves. (During the War of Independence, Esteves housed a notorious Spanish prison; now it hosts a tourist hotel.)

Orton's narrative of the first two expeditions, *The Andes and the Amazon*, went through three editions. Of his itineraries, he recalled the:

romantic rides over the Cordilleras amid the wild magnificence of nature, the adventurous walk through the primeval forest, the exciting canoe-life on the Napo, and the long, monotonous sail on the waters of the Great River.

The versatile scholar also wrote a zoology text, a mineralogy manual for amateur prospectors, monographs on Andean geology, hummingbirds, and condors (Orton related one traveler's incredulous claim to have killed a condor so big "a single quill-feather of which was twenty good paces long!"), and a compendium of proverbs. He became a professor at Vassar, where he edited a volume of essays on the education of women. (Orton strongly favored opening universities to females: "Some will pronounce this impossible. So it was said of Sherman's march to the Sea.") Following his death, his papers and artifacts were donated to Ingham University, where he last taught, but the school later went bankrupt. Although Yale University and the Smithsonian Institution have some of his material, his photographs—which may have been among the first taken of some of the regions he visited—have not been located.

Three years after Orton's death, Edwin Heath became the first explorer to chart the Río Beni from mouth to origin. He christened a Beni tributary the Río Orton for the man who loved canoe-life.

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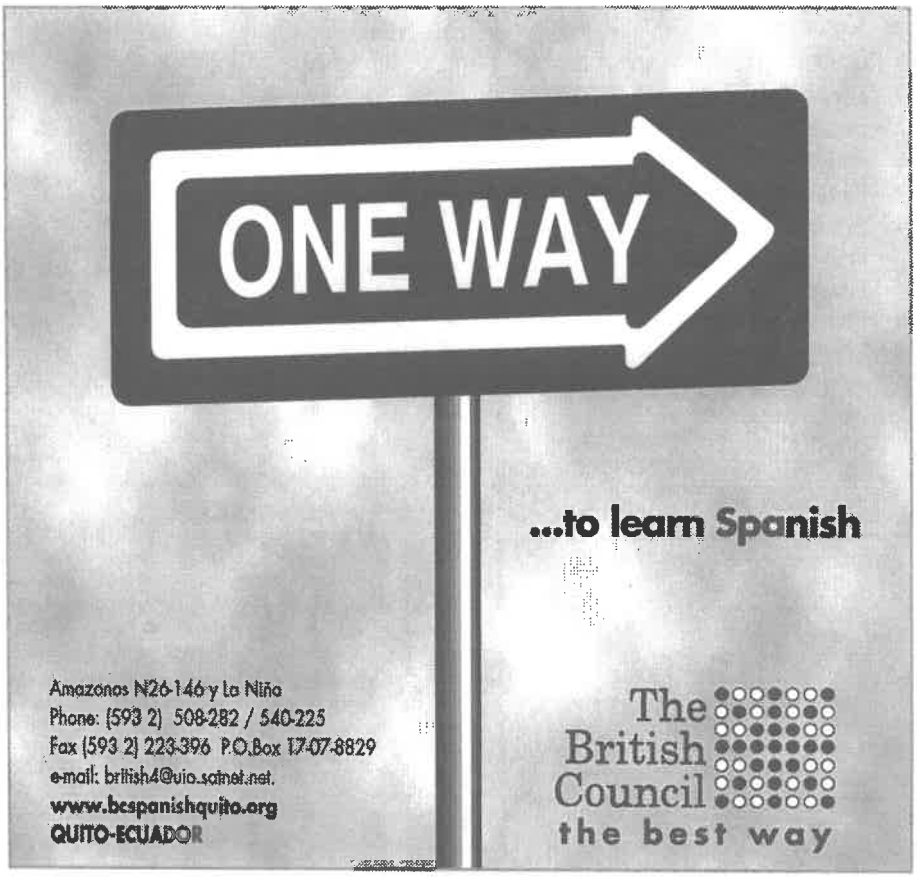

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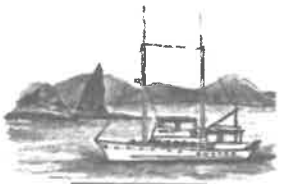

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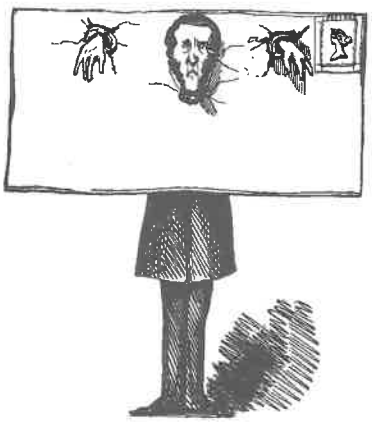

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LONELY PLANET 1997

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LET'S GO ECUADOR 1998

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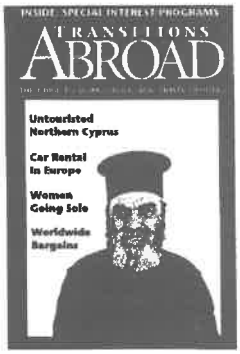

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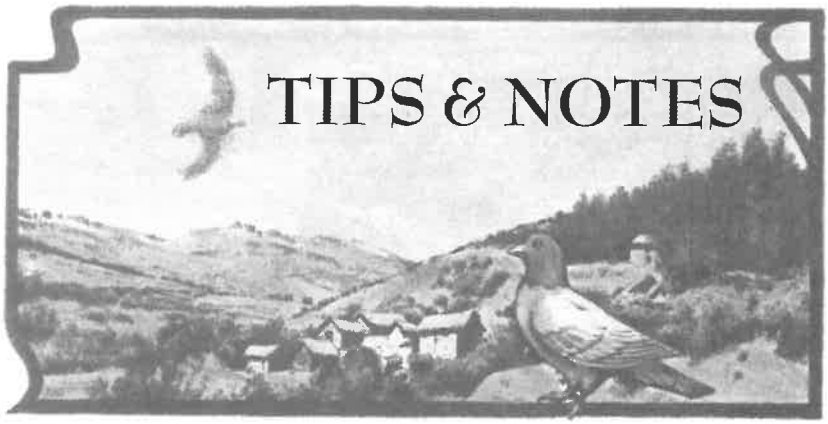


Members: Why You Get Renewals When You Do

We send along a notice to renew your membership with your last issue of the *South American Explorer*. Since the magazine arrives in your mailbox in February, May, August, and November, you may receive a renewal notice in, say, February, even though the date on your membership card states you expire in April. What gives? Well, in the early years of the Club, we published the magazine erratically, sometimes printing only one (or even no) issues in a given year. To soothe livid members, we assured them that their "annual" membership would expire only when they received four issues of the magazine. Although the magazine now gets published on time, we still find the last-issue-renewal-reminder to be the easiest way to remind you that you're in peril of severing your precious tie with the South American Explorers Club.

A note to our members outside of the United States: The expiration date that appears on your membership card is given American-style as month/day/year. So stop calling us in a huff if you signed up for a year membership in November and think your membership's expiring in February when your card reads "Exp. date 11/2/1999."

The Straight Poop

Dr. Joseph Breault, author of the *SAE*'s "Ask the Doctor" column, wrote that "diarrhea...afflicts about 20-30 percent of travelers to developing countries and is typically associated with an increase (sometimes double) in the number of loose bowel movements. Fever and/or bloody stools are common in about 5 percent of Traveler's Diarrhea (TD) cases". Want to avoid this nasty affliction? Well, the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health is *paying* volunteers to try a new way to protect travelers from TD.

Through July 1999, Johns Hopkins University will test an oral vaccine against Traveler's Diarrhea in Antigua, Guatemala and Cuernavaca, Mexico. Volunteers must be in either city for a minimum of 15 days, be 18 years or older, and not have traveled to a developing country within the last year. Upon completion of the study, volunteers will be awarded $300 for a 15-day trial and $400 for a 3-week trial.

Participants in the study will take the vaccine or a placebo a few weeks before leaving the U.S. or Canada and maintain a health diary while in Guatemala or Mexico. During their stay abroad, participants will be required to submit three stool samples and two blood samples collected by a Johns Hopkins University staff member at AmeriSpan Unlimited facilities.

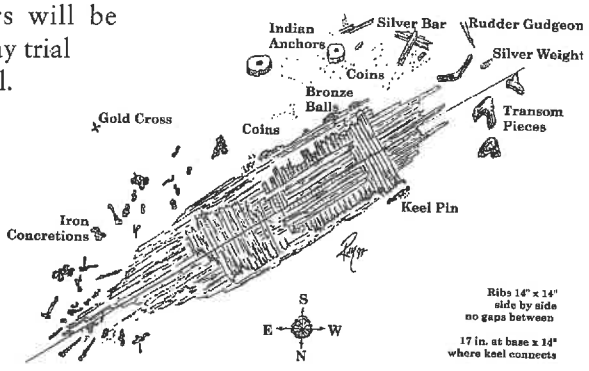
For more information, contact Janet Shimko at Johns Hopkins, 410-955-0053 or jshimko@jhsph.edu, or AmeriSpan Unlimited at 800-879-6640 or info@amerispan.com.

La Capitana Update

A fortune in silver from *La Capitana*, a galleon that sank in 1654 off Chanduy, Ecuador (see *SAE* Issue 52, Summer 1998), now rests in the hands of treasure salvagers after a battle with Ecuador's government over the booty that lasted more than a year.

"We are glad it's over, and we are happy the split was finally honored," said Rob McClung, the expedition leader and president of the Oceanic Atlantic Corporation who recovered nearly 6,000 coins from the shipwreck in early 1997. Ecuador will keep half of the coins while the other half will be cleaned and inventoried in a Florida lab.

The coins had been stored since May 1997 in the Central Bank of Ecuador in Guayaquil. On September 9, 1998, more than a year after operations ground to a halt and the salvagers filed a $25 million lawsuit against government officials to force a division of the treasure, the Ecua-



dorian government granted the salvagers their 50 percent share. The salvagers' half, estimated at more than $1 million, will be divided among investors in Ecuador and the United States.

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Servas is an international network of hosts and travelers striving to build peace and understanding by providing opportunities for contact between people of diverse cultures and backgrounds. By getting together, hosts and travelers share their lives, interests, and concerns about social and international issues.

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To learn more about traveling or hosting through Servas, write 11 John Street, Suite #407, New York NY 10038, call 212-267-0252, fax 212-267-0292, e-mail: servas-info@servas.org or browse http://servas.org.

Art Workshops in Guatemala

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Classes are small, with three to ten students per workshop so each participant receives individual attention and a unique artistic experience.

The art school provides a total package that includes tuition, lodging in an old colonial home (the program's home base), hearty breakfasts, transportation, and field trips. For more information on these workshops, see www.artguat.org or contact Art Workshops in La Antigua Guatemala at info@artguat.org, Tel: 612-825-0747, Fax: 612-825- 6637.

Bogus Book Contest Winners

On December 1, 1998, we jammed all entries for the South American Explorers Club Believe-It-or-Not Bogus Book Contest (1999 catalog) into a Shipibo urn and plucked out two winners. Congratulations to Linda Ballou and Leo Van Amerongen who each won a $50 gift certificate, a Latin American music tape, and the much-coveted South American Explorers Club mystery prize.

It didn't hurt that Linda Ballou included with her entry ten bolivianos to improve her chances of winning and the following letter: "I'm a sucker for a contest with prizes, especially Mystery Prizes. So I read your catalog cover-to-cover, and I must tell you I haven't laughed so hard since the last time I delved into my Ogden Nash collection. Your godawful puns and caustic commentary had me rolling on the floor. And your bogus books reminded me of the time my radio hero, Jean Shepard, finessed a title onto the Bestseller List by generating a demand for a book that had never been written. Then he wrote it. You may be missing a great opportunity here..."

We're holding the next Bogus Book drawing on June 1, 1999, so keep those entries coming. If you don't have a copy of our 1999 catalog, request one by calling:

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There's a US$3 charge for sending a catalog outside the United States.

The Ithaca Club staff cheers for the winners of the 1999 Bogus Book Contest.

La Hospederia Don Bosco La Tola

Los Niños Migrantes 1999

by Diana Morris,
Quito Club Business Manager
explorer@saec.org.ec

Christmas has come and gone, and thanks to the kind donations of money, food, school supplies, and clothing from SAEC members, the kids had a very special holiday season. We gave the kids a special dinner, individual gifts, and a little spending money to use as they chose. The kids also helped prepare the annual dinner for over 700 people at Don Bosco and other activities to celebrate Christmas.

Last fall, Las Damas Diplomaticas and the food store SuperMaxi provided wooden crates for kids in the carpentry shop to construct items to sell at various fairs. Our good friends at Aya Huma in Peguche hosted a weekend retreat for a group of twenty-five kids. We stayed in a very pleasant hostal outside of Otavalo and enjoyed the local food and music. Since most of the kids never celebrate their birthdays because they don't know their date of their birth, we celebrated everyone's birthday in September with a big party. In December, we took a two-day excursion to Cotopaxi Park.

School is going well. Volunteers teach classes in Math and Natural Sciences and help with other subjects—no easy task, as the kids vary greatly in age and learning levels. Still, the kids learn something every day.

One of the boys is a talented runner and completed the biggest race in Quito, the 13.5 km el Ultimas Noticias, in 57 minutes—way ahead of the SAEC staff who also ran. Congratulations, Rodrigo! We are helping him get involved in a training program.

1999 will bring more children into La Tola. There will be new faces to wash and names to remember, but thanks to the generosity of particular members (who have asked not to be mentioned, but you know who you are!), there is ongoing hope for the children and the future of the school. Thank you for the chance to make a difference in the community where we live, work, and travel! Prospero Año Nuevo!

Donations for Diana's La Tola projects can be sent to the U.S. Office at 126 Indian Creek Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

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Lima Club

A very nice couple recently e-mailed us, enthusiastically inquiring how they could help support the Club. Our Founder and President, Don Montague, responded, as only he can:

"Off to Peru, are you?" he wrote. "Well, you're arriving at a historical moment. We are in the throes of giving birth to a new Clubhouse in Cusco. It is in the crucible of such tumultuous times that reputations are made, the old order thrown over, and the new proclaimed. Of course, heads roll and the innocent get mauled, too, but what the Hell."

No small feat, establishing a Cusco Clubhouse. It is going to take hard work and meticulous planning—both attributes we possess in abundance. However, there exists another requirement a bit harder to come by: cash.

We are extremely mindful of our status as a non-partisan, non-profit research organization, dedicated to providing our members with up-to-the-minute travel services, information and advice. As a matter of policy, we do not accept commissions from the hotels, agencies and guides mentioned in our literature. Instead, we pass on those financial benefits directly to SAEC members in the form of discounts. And our recommendations are the product of the quality of service our members receive—no more, no less.

In short, we're almost entirely member supported. But such independence has its price, too. Resources are limited. The time and energy of our Clubhouse managers and volunteers is a labor of love, with scant remuneration in return. We are always scraping for that new computer monitor, or book for our library, or photocopy machine.

Growth and expansion occurs slowly, cautiously. What we propose for Cusco is a giant step. We are going to need your financial support.

To find out how you can make your U.S. tax-deductible donation to the Cusco Clubhouse Project, contact:

South American Explorers Club
U.S. Office
126 Indian Creek Road
Ithaca, NY 14850
Tel: (607) 277-0488
Fax: (607) 277-6122

E-mail: explorer@samexplo.org
Or, consult our Webpage for details: http://www.samexplo.org

☞

Kudos to the National Police in Huaraz. In response to a number of armed robberies directed at tourists near the Cross at the Mirador de Retaquenua, overlooking the city, police lost no time in deploying plainclothes officers as decoys. A rash of arrests were made, and a cache of stolen backpacks and personal items recovered.

Similarly, Cusco's crime problem finally seems to be getting serious attention. On October 15, a special counsel was assigned to investigate crimes against travelers and coordinate action by Cusco's Office of Tourist Protection, the Tourist Police and Indecopi, Peru's consumer protection agency.

Also, a neighborhood watch program was established in San Blas—the most frequent location of strangle muggings in which victims are choked into unconsciousness. The Junta de Vecinos del Historico Barrio de San Blas—created with support from PromPeru and the European Union—is coordinating with police to create a "Citizens Safety Plan" and is working toward being able to press criminal charges against accused assailants on behalf of travelers who have already left Cusco. There has also been hard lobbying for a greater police presence at night on the narrow, winding streets surrounding the Plaza de Armas. But despite all these efforts, it is still advisable to always take a taxi after dark.

☞

Clubhouse Manager Tim Currie is moving on from the Lima Clubhouse after more than a year and a half of service. Tim writes: "I would like to say a warm thanks to all those who passed though the Lima office during my tenure. You—the membership—are what keeps the SAEC going. So...I guess it's "*hasta la proxima*" for now. See you soon—I'll miss you all."

Tim's boundless energy, professionalism and encyclopedic knowledge of travel in South America enhanced this Clubhouse immensely. Luckily for us, and members, his departure from the Lima Clubhouse office does not mean a departure from the organization. He plans to continue his connection to SAEC as an advisor and, from time to time, as a hands-on project consultant.

Also, he and his fiancée, former Assistant Clubhouse Manager Janice Davies, along with club member Andrew Davies, have created a non-profit educational aid organization, Flipside Schoolworks. Their goal is to improve the level of education and quality of life in developing communities. Flipside's first project is the construction and the establishment of an

early childhood education school officially called a "PRONOEI." The hole that exists in Peru's rudimentary educational system means that most children in Lima's poorer districts aged three to six spend the majority of their days unsupervised. The PRONOEI program provides early education, with a focus on public health and social development. Basic nourishment is also provided on a daily basis, critical at a child's early stages of development. The community of Virgen de Fatima, located within Lima's impoverished pueblo joven district of Villa Maria del Triunfo, is the targeted community. Once funds are raised the community will be directly involved in the construction the school, set to begin in July of 1999. The program is also collecting materials to be used in the classroom, for both existing and projected PRONOEI's.

For more information about the program or making a donation please e-mail Schoolworks@Yahoo.com. Donations can also be sent to:

Flipside Schoolworks
4927 48 St.
Innisfail, AB
Canada, T4G 1N1

Or care of any office of the SAEC.

☞

Thanks are in order to Kimberly Edgar, Michael Reames, and especially Carlos Dall'Orso, for their assistance with hand carries. And a special thank you to Jason Bober (AKA: Daddy-Badness). After six months as the Quito Clubhouse's main trip report handler, Jason passed through Lima, where he graced us with his good humor and fine cooking. He also put our trip reports in order.

☞

Of all the visits received in recent months, the most illustrious was that by South American Explorer Club Founder Don Montague, who made port in Callao on a two-day layover of the cruise ship Royal Viking Sun. Something magic happens

Quito Club

when Don is here, in the very spot where it all began 21 years ago. Light bends, and we fade to past tales of the early days, when adventure travel was truly adventurous; when bureaucratic obstacles were no less confounding but much more absurd; and when paying our rent was managed with sleight of hand and a wink.

At the end of the 1998 in Ecuador: The peace treaty between Peru and Ecuador was finally signed; repairs to the roads and bridges damaged by El Niño neared completion; and the volcano Gua Gua Pichincha sat in a state of yellow alert showing no increased signs of activity. Tourism has been lower for 1998 but there are positive signs for growth in the coming year.

☞

One of the notable presentations in the Quito Club demonstrated the preparation of Colada Morada, a thick, red beverage served with guaguas de pan on el Dia de Los Muertos, a holiday celebrated on November 2. This is a holiday where people visit the graves of their loved ones to pay their respects.

A second great presentation took place at Café Cultura when Ron Mader, an environmental writer, journalist, and expert on Latin American eco-travel, showed slides and discussed issues related to these topics. Ron was also one of the presenters at the Ecotourism conference held in Quito in October. Thanks Ron for your support of the SAEC!

☞

Ecuador hosted the Raid Gauloise, a five-day, 500 km endurance race that included climbing Cotopaxi, river kayaking, horseback riding, and running. Forty-nine teams and hundreds of adventurers roamed every corner of the country, drawing huge crowds of onlookers. The race was reputed to have been the most difficult ever due to the terrain and altitude.

We have a brand spanking new photocopier in the front room of the Club for staff and member use. An additional bonus: Sending e-mail from the Club is now free! Also, the long-awaited and carefully planned Club brochure is hot off the press! When arriving in the Quito airport, keep your eyes peeled for the Club's advertisement and brochures on display.

☞

Amigos del Tourismo has continued to meet reguarly. Our last meeting with the Minister of Tourism brought about renewed hope for some resolutions to problems ailing this industry. The next meeting in December will include representatives from many governmental tourist-related agencies.

☞

The Quito Club sponsorship of Los Ninos Migrantes de La Tola has continued. See page 48 for more details. A huge thank you to all who have kindly sent in donations!

☞

Last, but not least, we want to thank all the volunteers here in Quito who have worked so hard to keep us going! Gracias Catherine, Boz and Caz, Jo, Blair, Jody and Jody, Anna, Alicia, Linette, John, Andrew, Diana, Sheila, Melanie, and our talented helpers Maruja and Esther!

From Pierre Proulx:

Tingo Maria, Peru

I lived for a year in the city of Tingo Maria, Peru which is, incidently (and I think I'm saying this objectively), the most beautiful place on earth that I have seen as of yet. I think I do not need to travel anymore in my whole life, since nothing could beat it. O.K., O.K., maybe I'm being a bit too biased here, and I have to admit that the town—even with its new Plaza de Armas with the Parque-Central-de-Miraflores style seats—lacks architectural unity, but the surroundings will nevertheless plunge you in a Garden of Eden (Just don't eat the forbidden fruit without washing it; you'll get cholera). Unfortunately, the region is home to major concentrations of Sendero Luminoso and MRTA terrorists. A few rules may be of use if traveling in this area:

1. Traveling by night is not recommended, as the Sendero often stops buses and collects "taxes" from everybody.

2. Don't talk politics. If someone starts a conversation, assume as neutral position as possible—you don't know with whom you are talking or who is listening. This may sound hysterical, but it is what foreigners living there suggest.

3. If you end up in a Sendero road block, stay calm (You wouldn't want to die from a heart attack when you might have made it otherwise!). Do as you're told, do not speak unless spoken to, and repeat the communist slogans along with the rest of the crowd. Occasionally, some people are murdered, most likely those from local organizations, but you probably won't be, although you may leave with little or no luggage. Of course, this is not the place to yell "USA! USA!" or "Mao sucks!" Be docile. Afterward, the locals on the bus will act as if nothing happened and won't denounce the crime to the police. This is probably because in the 1980s the Sendero was wont to kill those who did. Also, filing a complaint requires long and boring procedures. It's up to you to decide.

From Tim Currie:

El Niño had a huge impact on Peru's Ballestas Islands in the beginning of 1998. With the water temperature higher than usual, the anchovy, the area's primary bait fish, left the area. This caused a huge number of sea lions to die of starvation. During the months of February and March, the coast near Pisco and Paracas was littered with sea lion carcasses. Many of the migratory birds also left the area.

Fortunately, things have improved. In my last two visits to the area, there was a noticeable increase in wildlife returning to the area. Things are still a little crazy, and some species of birds usually present still haven't materialized. Others, like the blue-footed booby common in the Galapágos, have taken up residence.

As for the future? People I've talked to in the last few months are optimistic that the colder than usual winter will help offset last year's warming and predict a near-normal summer season.

Do you have any tips you picked up during your travels? File trip reports! Mail us at:
South American Explorers Club
126 Indian Creek Road
Ithaca, NY 14850

or e-mail us at:
tips&notes@samexplo.org.

See your name in print and bask in other members' thanks and admiration.

Sangay: The Simple Things in Life

Will Paine
Photographs by François Panchard

Back from Sangay; back from the wet and the mud and the low cloud. The Sangay Trip Report is written, as pithily as possible; I will hand it to Melanie in the South American Explorers Club personally, with my very hands, and with futile carelessness. She already knows the obsessive energy I put into organizing the thing. Everybody knows. Back at the hotel they know. Don Patricio knows; he wants photos and will get them; he will get rock from the summit, too. Several gringo notice boards have an inkling. Maria del Carmen certainly knows; she will tease me about my "tyres," which ten days of slog almost erased; she will get rock. Rosa, my remaining private student, knows. (Rock.) Vincio Caz, our guide, knew. He got the plastic sheeting, a commemorative fog whistle and a good tip. He would not have thought much of rock, but he will get photos of our comradeship. And my two overlapping groups of fellow trekkers, they both knew my obsession. On the shoulder of South America's most continuously active volcano, with no missiles coming down—only light hail slanting softly through the cloud—I and my first group quarrelled bitterly. Continuation was not a matter for guides to decide (they were as unfamiliar at that point as we). Don't ask me why—I know, and I don't want to discuss it—but I went down with the others. They get nothing from me, not a pebble, not the merest crumb of grit. Their dogs are dead, as the Quebeckers say. *Ses chiens sont morts.* They get no rock.

Days when Dire Straits were in nappies

So I sit here in a café, milking the balmy residue of a day's rumination in the tourist-riddled town of Baños. The choo-choo train wheels down the main street, jangling Anglo-American music, wisps of smoke curling from a simulation boiler on its bonnet. "Sultans of Swing" throbs in slightly more civilized fashion from across the street. Rosa came here thirty years ago for her vogue honeymoon in the undeveloped resort. Days when Dire Straits were in nappies an impossible half-world away and when trains ran on real steam for real reasons. The cane sugar aroma is the same as it must have been, and the confectionery in its tight oval packs. The baths' water is of eter-

Will Paine grew up a farmer's son in the UK, getting his modern languages degree in 1988. He then spent seven years doing 'much of note and little of consequence' and failing to visit Africa and Asia. His abiding passion is philology; in 1992 he taught English in the British Council, Quito. He is now a cycle courier in Berlin, has a bad knee and is working on his masterpiece.

nal vintage. And the church cloisters will not have changed much, with their interior depictions of Virgin deliverance from Tungurahua's olden-day volcanic fury. Sangay Volcano, with its cooled lava flanks and the festooned knife-edge crests of its buckled approaches, is a far cry from all this, and a good thing too. The name means "Gentle One" because its molten streams have never escaped the rugged terrain to raze human settlements. But this account is not about lava (there was very little), nor about falling rock (the material that fell, albeit potentially fatal, was not spewed red from the monster's innards but thawed loose in the sunlight and ricocheted down the smooth trapezium). In truth, it's hardly about the volcano at all. It's about the simple things of life. Simple things like string and plastic.

It began in Alao really, the usual jump-off village for a Sangay expedition, a spattering of houses on a valley floor near the end of the rough track from Licto. I had approached Vinicio carefully, sobered by visions of the sedan-chair conditions and Club Med fare that previous expeditions have plied guides with. I need not have worried. He wanted our trade, and his one condition was straightforward and obvious: Whatever we ate, he ate. He and whatever porters we took with us.

Vinicio's little son had been leading me to another guide I had named when Vinicio dashed down from his steep onion plots and called us back. It was late morning, but the day's toil already stood in his parched face and blackened hands. He was blind in one eye, gawped like an oaf, and was instantly friendly and businesslike, if unnecessarily deferential, and we got along immediately. The boy, whose innocence had jeopardized a financial windfall, received a tongue-lashing in Quechua. Vinicio was accommodating: No, he didn't need a rucksack if we didn't have one to lend. And he didn't need a tent. Just bring plastic, he said. A three-meter strip of decent length. Plastic.

I was cock-a-hoop. I had envisioned rainy evenings squatting under the paltry ceiling of my flimsy Darién plastic. Now, while the others huddled in their cramped, state-of-the-art tents, I would curl up snugly with Vinicio in whatever shelter he was used to throwing up in the bush. Any porters the others felt they needed would mean a plethora of plastic and warmth—this was no lowland, jungle trek. I would listen to their bilingual patter, and talk would be of the day and the day to come, of the old days, and maybe even of someone's great-grandfather who had guided the Englishman Whymper on his way to Ecuadorean summits. Or of someone else's cousin who had helped take smashed bodies off the easy, murderous slopes of the Gentle One.

They don't usually do that. They never usually do that.

For the first night's rest, we bedded in the thatched hovel of Culebrillas, far out on the Alao cattle hacienda. We hung drenched clothes on grimy beams over the fire, and as they steamed, I laid out my accommodation plan for the next night. Vinicio was mildly dismissive, but I had to get it out.

"I'll give you my idea first, Vin, and you see if you like it. OK?"

"Hrmph. Right." Don Ricardo and Felix, porters, budged closer, twinkling with interest.

"Now, there are trees at Yanayacu, aren't there? Trees for the plastic?"

"Yes, there are."

"Right," I gasped, flushed with adrenalin, clearing a space on the dirt floor and grabbing a twig. "Here we have a section of plastic, ten meters by three. We take my rope and string it as a ridge pole across here." I gashed through the diagram and made a brief rhetorical pause to allow for expressions of admiration. Vinicio said:

"Yes."

"Then we knot two corners and take them down to the ground."

"Yes."

"We tie two other strings not far from the tent's apex and keep them elevated, dropping the rest of the plastic down as a windbreak wall and a groundsheet."

"Yes. We usually do that," Vinicio assured me. I basked.

They don't usually do that. They never usually do that. End of Day 2, and I had fallen for it again, believing what information sources the world over imagine you want to hear. But that was not the problem.

"Vinicio."

"Yes."

"This is Yanayacu?"

"Yes."

"There are no trees..."

"There are no trees. *Tranquilo.*"

I gritted my teeth and stared round at the gorse and shrub. I wanted honest-to-God hazel or elder, sturdy greenwood boughs. I fancy my vision blurred. "Vinicio. There are no trees here. Jesus Christ! Suzanne, there are no trees here!"

She glanced up from her tent, a miracle of taut geometry which seemed to be erecting itself, to show stone-faced sympathy. I'm sure it was sympathy.

The guide had his machete out, and the three of them stood there in their ragged capes of polythene as the drizzle settled in for the night. There was an untroubled but busy air about them.

"If it pleases el Señor to wait here, we will fetch poles."

What's this harebrained scheme, I raged to myself as they dipped out of sight. Well, I'll bloody well do my bit to the end, I thought, and splashed, white-faced, across the brook after them. They had disappeared into a re-entrant, and when I joined them, Vinicio was high up in a bank of denser growth, slashing and trimming. I still didn't get it.

"One meter eighty!" I bawled up, with humor. Vinicio produced seven "poles," flaccid as dressage whips. I shouldered five of them in a clumsy asterisk and bulldozed my way darkly back to camp.

"Does el Señor have string?" Vinicio inquired of me in his characteristic third person. I had a considerable bundle of hairy *cabuya* string, the stuff they dry from the spiny, fibrous plant. Vinicio jabbed the two poles into the earth seven-feet apart. He then bent them inward until their tips overlapped and tied the join fast. An arch. Pastoral architecture. An igloo for the tropics. I broke out in an abashed smile.

I nodded off in childish excitement that night. We had shared private stashes of food, and our escorts had murmured about me in amusement as I read in candlelight. But old-times conversation had not materialized; by the time my gate-crashing companions had cleared out of our miniature Nissan hut to their cramped tents, it was well past bedtime.

That was Yanayacu, second night. Back at Culebrillas on night five, with me still dumfounded at my own spinelessness in our mountainside tiff, we met another group heading for the volcano we had abandoned unclimbed. I joined it.

It was a bare-faced lie.

It was not any old group. For a start, it included Delphine, a française I had met on the slopes of Guatemala's Pacaya Volcano almost a year earlier and had bade farewell to on the lapping shores of Atitlán. Then there was Marko, a likeable, jumped-up German who at once wiped the Enid Blyton grin of introduction off my face by attempting to decree English as our language of communication. The spiritual and social leader, however, was Franck, a fascinating study in Franco-Colombian hyperactivity. And wrapping up this merry band in grotesque, granny-knot fashion were the group logistics.

They were cold and wet. "No waterproofs?" I asked solicitously. Sophie, the fourth member, had a skimpy cagoule affair; the others were lugging several kilos of thin, sodden wool around with them.

"No guide," I mused. Our own hired help was in the hut, shaking their heads. I fingered my stubble. "Don't worry. The route is describable." I didn't add at that stage that the actual

conditions were indescribable.

"How much food have you got?" I was already coming to my decision, and the question was for my own benefit.

"Enough for a month," replied Marko mildly, without ostentation. It was a bare-faced lie. Later they itemized it—perhaps the first dietary planning they had undertaken: "...at least 1½ kilos of rice...," "...you still got that tin of sardines, Delphine?..."

Changing allegiances was irresistible. I had fallen in love.

Tents? One. Designed for two people. No fly. Tried, tested, porous.

And footwear: They were shod in sopping plimsolls where knee-length waders were *de rigeur*. Changing allegiances was irresistible. I had fallen in love.

But I digress. This piece is about string.

Halfway up the massive incline out of Culebrillas, I and the women came upon Franck sitting on a tuffet, kneading a rotten gym shoe. He grinned his feverish, call-this-a-problem? grin and shot the most devalued word in his vocabulary into the ravaged plastic of the sole:

"Harlot. My shoes are screwed." This was a reverse by any standards, but there was no time to dwell on it if you wanted to make sense of his tumbling, unsegregated stream (I punctuate out of habit): "...but don't worry. I can patch 'em up. I've got fishing line. You go on..."

We went on. He already had the option on my ankle boots, but they were too big for me and a farcical hindrance to him. We all rendezvoused at the top for lunch and a group photo. Sangay flirted with cu-

Continued on page 58

Climbing Sangay

by François Panchard

Sangay is a furious, highly active volcano that lies hidden in the middle of the Sangay National Park about 200 km south of Quito, Ecuador. It's physically demanding, not because it's a technically difficult climb, but because it's located in a remote area and you must endure a long walk before reaching its base.

The volcanic activity has quieted down in the past five years. I've read reports written in 1992 describing continuously high activity with Sangay spitting rocks as big as cars. Many who climbed at this time gave up just a few hundred meters from the top, fearing for their safety. This phase seems to have come to an end, but even in December 1997, when I climbed during a period of low activity, every hour a huge white smoke cloud exploded from the crater with an incredible blast.

But the problem of Sangay's volcanic activity is secondary in comparison to the difficulties encountered on the path to the base camp called La Playa. The trail is bloody wet and muddy all year round. The December-January period is the best time to go. We did the trail to Sangay at the beginning of December, and it was still humid enough for us to imagine how awful it must be the rest of the year. Don't hike the trail without a guide. The difficulty of the terrain and dense vegetation require you to spend more time than you would expect, and there are many possibilities to get lost or have an accident. In my opinion, you have a better chance of winning the lottery than reaching Sangay without a guide. This is especially the case if the weather turns ugly and triples the depth of the rivers you need to cross.

There are two main trails leading to La Playa. The Eten-Plaza Pampa-Yanayacu-La Playa route is acessible by horse and donkey. If you're not afraid to sweat, try the hike along the Alao-Pampa Culebrillas-Yanayacu-La Playa path.

Suggestions on what to take: a good pair of rubber boots, a large poncho against the rain, extra clothes of synthetic fabrics (they dry faster), stove and fuel, a tent, a pair of gloves, and a pair of sunglasses.

When ascending the volcano, the biggest difficulty is to choose the right moment to leave the base camp. Usually, only the first few hours of the day are clear, then fantastic evaporation from the forest fills the air with vapor and fog. Finally, in the afternoon, it rains. The most ideal situation is when a huge storm hits in the middle of night. It then takes several hours to once again reach a critical level of humidity. Leave La Playa right after the storm, and six hours later you'll have the best chance to reach the top with an impressive view of the park.

For more information, see my web site at http://members.tripod.com/~franschi17/.

Traveler's Literary Companion: South & Central America Including Mexico

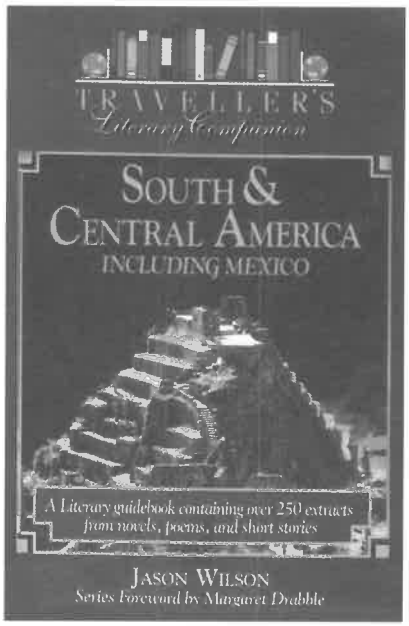
Jason Wilson, editor

Passport Books: Lincolnwood, 1995. 459 pages, paperback. $17.95

Jason Wilson's anthology of selections from 250 travelogues, novels, poems, and short stories is a worthy successor to a pair of long out-of-print classics, *The Green Continent* (1944), by Germán Arciniegas, and *The Golden Land* (1948), by Harriet de Onís. Arciniegas and Onís included only Latin American writers in their anthologies. Wilson has opened the pages to non-Latin American writers and gone beyond the obvious examples (such as Bruce Chatwin and Graham Greene) to include writers as obscure as Gordon Meyer and as well-known as Kurt Vonnegut, but not for his novel *Galápagos*.

Each *Traveler's Literary Companion* country entry has an overview of its history and literature, a booklist, a series of extracts, and bios of the featured authors. Literary-geographic bearings are provided with maps such as "Vargas Llosa's Peru" and "Garcia-Márquez's Colombia."

The book is directed at non-Spanish readers, so Wilson favors Latin



Americans available in English translation. Overall, he leans toward "imaginative writers," which eliminates most of the conventional travel scribes.

Wilson's selections are imaginative. For example, Robert Lowell, Alexandre von Humboldt, Joseph Conrad, Alejo Carpentier, Pablo Neruda, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Rómulo Gallegos are among his variegated picks for Venezuela. His Paraguayan recruits include R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Gordon Meyer, Augusto Roa Bastos, and Voltaire.

For those of you who slept through World Lit 101, Voltaire's Candide is hunted by the Inquisition and flees to the New World where his guide, Cacambo, tells him of the paradoxical behavior of the Jesuits in Paraguay: "In this country they kill Spaniards, and in Madrid they send them to heaven."

—Daniel Buck

A Condor Brings the Sun

Jerry McGahan

Sierra Club Books: San Francisco, 1996. 266 pages, hardcover.

Memories of 23 generations of oppression and injustice drive a young Runa Indian woman from Peru to undertake a bold plan to rescue a North American grizzly bear condemned to death by fish and game authorities.

Handed down from mother to daughter over the past 500 years, the history of the Runa people, who settled in an Andean village in pre-Incan times, reflects the typically South American cycle of conquest, exploitation and near annihilation. The Runa have survived the Incas and the Spanish. Now the heroine of this novel must face the wrath of the Sendero Luminoso, who seem intent on making her people pay for crimes they have not committed.

After being forced to watch the guerilla group torture and murder her boyfriend, Pilar at the age of 18 flees to the countryside to avoid a similar fate. She makes it as far as suburban Cusco, where she finds work as a domestic. While washing clothes in a river, she meets an American graduate student doing field research on the spectacled bear. Pilar

and Arnie fall in love, marry and depart to Montana. There, he resumes his university study of wildlife biology and she gets a job assisting a local veterinarian. End of story? Hardly.

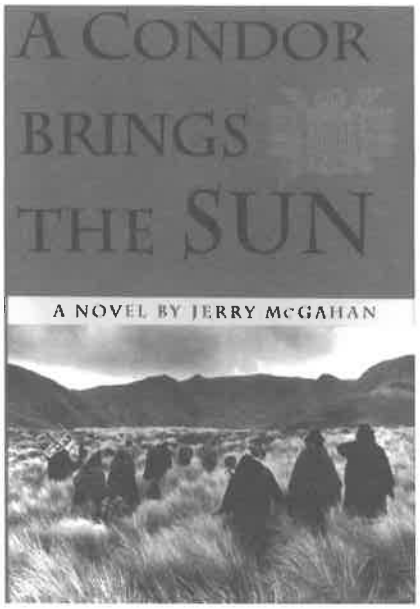
The happy couple hears the sad tale of Celeste, a grizzly bear that menaced one tourist too many and was captured for experimentation. Tortured by researchers developing noxious repellent compounds, Celeste is sentenced to death. No zoo wants her, even though she is pregnant. After the birth of her cubs, she will be put down.

Outraged by this cruel turn of events which reminds her of the plight of her own people, Pilar concocts a scheme to rescue the bear and her cubs. Jeopardizing his own future, Arnie reluctantly agrees to join his wife and her friends in the breakout, with the goal of resettling the animals in a California wilderness area where until recently grizzlies had coexisted with a now extinct Indian tribe.

Does the rescue conspiracy succeed? Do Pilar and Arnie live happily ever after? Read the book, which seems to have been written with Hollywood in mind. Replete with lust in exotic locales, graphic descriptions of violent conquest, colorful flashbacks to the Incan golden age, high adventure at high altitude, unbearable suspense, a cuddly grizzly cub or two, and a surprise ending, this novel would make a terrific movie. Don't wait for its arrival at your local theater—a bargain hard-cover copy is available from Jerry McGahan himself.

—MARTIN HIMMELFARB

To order this book, contact Jerry McGahan at Tel: (406) 726-3480, Box 71 Arlee, MT 59821. $9.95 plus postage and handling, hardcover.



Timber, Tourists, and Temples

Richard Primack, David Bray, Hugo Galletti and Ismael Ponciano, editors

Island Press, 1998, 425 pages, $35

The Maya Forest, or Selva Maya, stretches across the waistline of Mesoamerica, a region shared by Mexico, Guatemala and Belize. The Maya civilization took root here for more than a thousand years. However, this timeless forest is quickly changing.

The current rate of deforestation in the Maya Forest surpasses 80,000 hectares a year. As conservationists have championed the need for preserving the region's biodiversity, local leaders insist on the need to balance conservation with local development, primarily forest production, tourism and, more recently, organic coffee.

The integration of these topics is examined in *Timber, Tourists and Temples*, a collection of articles and of voices from the living Maya and mestizos who inhabit the region. While the title is catchy, the book's subtitle, "Conservation and Development in the Maya Forest of Belize, Guatemala and Mexico," better describes the contents. This book does look—in depth—at how locals are trying to balance making a living with conserving the forest.

The eclectic mix of academic prose often turns to the local actors for enlightenment. In Hugo Galletti's interview with campesino farmer Raymundo Terron Santana, Terron explains that the forests cannot be left untouched, despite the good-intentions of environmentalists. "We have been living in, managing and harvesting the forest for a long time," Terron says. "There are areas where we have been restoring and which we will incorporate into the permanent forest areas. There are other ecologists who see the situation as we see it, and this is very good for the peasants."

While the chapters are of high caliber, my chief criticism with *Timber, Tourists and Temples* is that the alliterative title is highly misleading. There is little discussion of tourism and even less of temples in this book—unless we consider the Selva Maya a Green Cathedral of its own. The obvious questions seem unasked.

No mention is given of programs that could combine social tourism with the archaeological tourism that already exists. Is the grand Mundo Maya program truly promoting ecotourism or local control of tourism? This is unasked and unanswered in this book.

A more serious complaint is the lack of discussion of the transient nature of many of the official programs mentioned in this book. Many of the chapters highlight new projects, but no mention is made of previous failures or the fact that some of the

Book reviews, continued from page 57

projects highlighted no longer exist.

There's nothing wrong with change, but in an area where civilization can be measured in centuries, it's odd that foundations continue to fund eighteen- to twenty-four-month programs. Such short-term programs with little integration are criticized elsewhere, though not here.

In the introduction, the editors describe and promote an integrated, regional approach toward conservation in the Maya Forest. An example is the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, which can provide a great deal of information on cross-border natural resource issues. However, very often this pooled technical data is only "shared" by a few elite organizations.

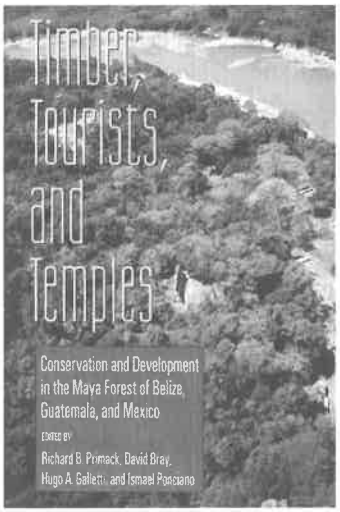
What this book does best is offer a glimpse into new conservation strategies as well as the actions of key players—government departments, non-governmental groups, *ejido* committees, and indigenous organizations. Bibliographic citations are also first-rate.

Forest management in Quintana Roo is examined in several chapters. How *ejidos* managed to harvest and replant sought-after species of hardwoods such as mahogany make engaging reading.

Likewise, the innovative programs used by community groups in Chiapas balance forestry with global environmental issues engages the reader. These may hold the key to successful conservation strategies and environmental awareness.

Timber, Tourists and Temples is the most comprehensive book of its kind, an examination of the social, political and environmental issues in this region. For those interested in forest management and the conservation of tropical forest ecosystems, this book is highly recommended.

—Ron Mader


Timber, Tourists, and Temples
Conservation and Development in the Maya Forest of Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico
edited by
Richard B. Primack, David Bray, Hugo A. Galletti, and Ismael Ponciano

Sangay, continued from page 55

mulus in the distance, an arm's length away. We had hardly dropped down into the boggy slop of the next valley when Franck's shoes gave way again.

No death or drama. No gushing lava.

"Harlot," he gabbled, by way of drawing breath. "They're screwed again. Don't worry. No problem. Go on." Marko stayed back with him. We continued for a respectful period and, with an hour to go to Yanayacu, sat down and waited. Broken ankle? Death by quicksand? They eventually floundered into sight round a bluff.

"Mother of harlots! Twice I've mended these harlot shoes. Twice they've broken. Son!" He was carrying something dangling in one hand. "Once we get to camp I need just two meters of one strand of your red string, Will, and I can do a good job on them. Harlot! The mother! Let's go."

Then I saw what he was carrying. Franck was barefoot.

At Yanayacu, while Franck did a good job on his shoes, I did a good job on our accommodation. Four nights before, chagrin had sharpened my senses; now, on the exact same spot at the exact same campsite using some of the exact same rocks, I was copying from memory. Three arches. A slanted anchor pole lashed to the rear arch with a pad of grass to keep the plastic from snagging. A ridge string, with fore- and rear-guys, and a knee-high, perimeter string for skeleton reinforcement. Wherever plastic needed tying down, grass padded the knot to prevent cutting. And where stone weights were impracticable, two handfuls of *maram* grass, bent in their own little arch, provided the anchor for our *cabuya* guy-strings.

That night, we all slept like excited children. And the following evening, being without flashlights for the standard night trek, we pitched our cozy, plastic yurt on the páramo high above the last campsite, where there really were no trees and had to carry our poles up there.

That was Sangay. String, sticks, plastic, and other assorted unforgettables. No death or drama. No gushing lava. No eruptions every ten minutes, as books and hearsay had warned. Just the whirr-and-throb of fist-sized rocks hurling down near our heads through the thin air. And the malice of altitude and scree making aged beg-

gars of proud assailants. And, in that 2-week window of near-zero activity, just one isolated eruption, viewed from Culebrillas on the fifth night, when fiendish gobbets of red plummeted down the northern slope. Two and a half days later: the big, great feeling of accomplishment, and the don't-look-at-us innocence of summit fumaroles.

Night Nine for me was Night Six for the others and New Year's Eve for everyone at Culebrillas. Franck fussed like a chef over our last victuals, the devouring of which no stomach noticed. We took food off a photo expedition from the Central University and chewed garlic for dessert. Franck whored and harloted, briefly but viciously. He left his shoes where they died, dishonored, and next day walked the eight hours to Alao barefoot, spurning my gumboots.

When I got in, I went to see Vinicio. He was drunk. Every man in the village was drunk—it was January 1st—but he made a big effort for my sake, feting my arrival. His wife pushed a pint of hot milk in front of me, followed by half a gallon of potato soup. They refused money for the eggs I wanted to buy. I insisted, to make sure, but as always it was useless. I handed over the boots, the helmet, and the precious, promised plastic, finished my soup, and stifled a burp.

"Do forgive us," said Vinicio.

"What?"

"Forgive us. It's rather plain fare, but it's what we simple folk eat." The statement was without artifice. He was serious.

"Look, Vinicio..."

I set him right, wrung his hand, and left soon after.

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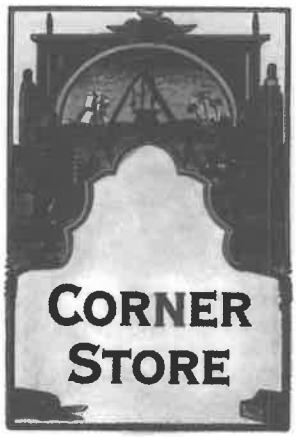

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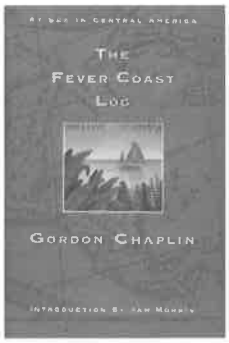

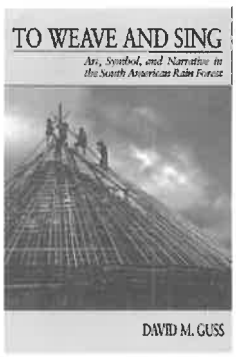

Patagonia or Bust

As we go to press, the GEOCAP expedition, a team of four geographers is setting forth to traverse the south Patagonia Icecap in southern Chile. This remote area, known as the Campo de Hielo Sur or the South Patagonia Icecap (SPI), is the largest ice cap outside the polar regions and the third largest ice mass in the world. Stretching nearly 325 kilometers in length and averaging 35 kilometers wide, the ice cap contains 48 distinct glacial outflows and covers an area of 13,000 square kilometers. The south Patagonia ice cap is comprised of 300 glaciers, 15 distinct mountain ranges, at least one active volcano (Cerro Lautoro) and numerous unclimbed peaks over 3,000 meters. The Cerro Torre, Monte Fitz Roy and Torres del Paine granite massifs all border the eastern flank of the ice cap.

GEOCAP has two goals: (1) Since global warming is causing dramatic changes in the natural system of the ice cap, climatologists, biologists, glaciologists, and other scientists need more precise area maps of glaciers to analyze these changes. The GEOCAP team plans to collect coordinate data along their traverse using Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers. Data will be submitted to the Byrd Polar Research Group of Ohio State University to aid their research. (2) Rock-climbers and mountaineers have many questions about this unknown area of the world. The GEOCAP expedition hopes to provide answers.

The plan is for the expedition to arrive in Chilean Patagonia on December 1st, 1998 and proceed overland to the city of Tortel. From there, a boat will deliver the team to the snout of the outlet glacier Jorge Montt. The traverse will begin here. To ferry the more than 600 pounds of equipment and supplies across the crevassed and boulder-strewn Jorge Montt glacier, the team will use skis and sleds, heading south across the ice cap. Previous parties attempting the traverse had difficulty with navigation, particularly in foul weather. To make an unsupported partial traverse of the South Patagonia Ice Cap, the GEOCAP expedition will use both GPS and satellite imagery. Once across the difficult glacier terrain, the expedition hopes to climb Cerro Lautaro to determine its true height. This will be done using differential GPS. In all, the team expects the expedition to last thirty days and is taking along 400 pounds of food and fuel for the 120-kilometer combination of trekking, skiing, and climbing.

Kyle Bohnenstiehl will lead the GEOCAP expedition. Kyle is a geographer who works with the Hopi Tribe out of Flagstaff, Arizona. Rob Weber, employed with Bechtel Nevada, will be the expedition's remote sensing analyst. Expedition cartographer Bart Matthews is an independent GIS consultant from Albuquerque. The expedition's GPS surveyor is Karl Feaux, a geodetic engineer with UNAVCO in Boulder. Chris Cochran, former Lima South American Explorers Club manager, was among the original members of this expedition. Chris died in a plane crash in Cambodia in May, 1997.

The GEOCAP team members have met most of the expedition costs out of their own pockets. While contributions of GPS receivers, ERDAS Imagine software tools, a grant from the South American Explorers Club, and other donations helped to get the expedition launched, additional financial help would be greatly appreciated.

For more information, see the GEOCAP expedition web site at www.for.nau.edu/~kbs.

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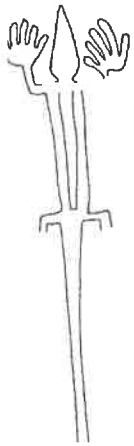

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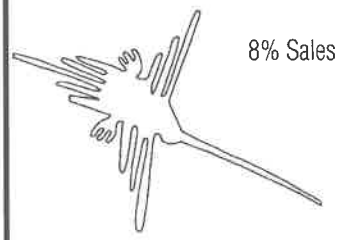

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BRASIL AVENTURA

Hey, you! Read this for a deal so incredibly attractive it's sure to enrage everyone who misses out. This is your chance to take advantage of this one-time, no-more-ever-again sale. What's the deal? Two incomparably beautiful, large-format, limited edition books on Brazil:

Brasil Aventura: Odysseys
11" x 11" Hardcover.
$55.00 [No member discount] Item #110

Brasil Aventura: On the Trail of Heroes
11" x 11" Hardcover.
$55.00 [No member discount] Item #124

Trust your Club. Someday, you'll see one of these books in the house of a friend or neighbor. Overcome by crushing envy, you'll say, "Sweet saints in the morning! Why didn't I buy these beauties when I had the chance?" Well, why didn't you? I'll tell you why. Because the Club's not a store, and you couldn't drop by to see for yourself just how gorgeous a book can be. That's why you can't bring yourself to shell out fifty-five big ones for a book you've never seen.

Still it's too bad because if you *could* see them, we wouldn't have to say nothin'. It's you who'd be waving the dollars and screaming, "Name your price! Just gimme the goods!"

We won't say this again. This is it. Just one more thing. Just so you know, we only have eight *Brazil Aventura: Odysseys* and twelve *Brasil Aventura: On the Trail of Heroes*. Chances are, it's already too late to cash in.

To all those who watched the golden ring sweep by, our sympathy. To those who seized the day, bravo!

Special Burglary Sale: Get both books for $100. Yes, it's a steal, and as a special favor to members buying both, we let you break into the Club after hours and make off with your loot of bargain books in the dead of night.

See order form on page 63.

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